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Published
2007

Conference Title
Nutrition & Dietetics

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Publication Category: Insight

Feasibility testing and stakeholder engagement in community-based nutrition and physical activity promotion intervention development.

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Community-based public health interventions are often criticised because they do not reach those most in need of the intervention. Target group and stakeholder engagement in intervention design and decision making is a central theme in community development approaches to public health. This sharing of decision making regarding interventions serves to increase target group participation and ownership of interventions and empower communities to help themselves. It also values the knowledge, insights and experiences of the community regarding solutions to identified problems. This study involved a process of stakeholder and target group engagement conducted as part of strategy design in a community-based nutrition and physical activity promotion project targeting young and disadvantaged women and infants (The Growing Years Project). Stakeholder engagement was facilitated by a modified nominal group series that encouraged discussion and assessment against a range of assessment criteria reflecting feasibility and effectiveness for a portfolio of intervention options. Group discussions were conducted amongst nutrition and physical activity specialists, front-line community child health staff and purposively sampled meetings of the target group. The portfolio of interventions developed for testing with stakeholders were based on determinant analysis facilitated by earlier community consultations with stakeholders and the target group, intervention research and service review. Discussions and ratings from each of the nominal group sessions was then analysed qualitatively and quantitatively to assist intervention modification and prioritisation. This shared-decision making process has helped prioritise a mix of strategies for implementation and has value as a process for community engagement in community nutrition practice.

Funding source: The Growing Years Project is funded by Health Promotion Queensland