

Research Space

Conference poster

Exercise professionals' confidence in engaging women to be physically active during pregnancy

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Introduction

It is recognised that physical activity (PA) levels significantly decline during pregnancy, even for women who were previously active, despite the CMO 2017 guidance recommending continued engagement with PA during pregnancy. The responsibility for providing this guidance is often passed between health and exercise professionals, leaving women confused, consequently, favouring inactivity (De Vivo & Mills, 2019).

Aims

The study aimed to determine: (i) what experiences exercise professionals (EP) have in engaging pregnant women to be physically active; (ii) how confident EP perceive themselves to be in engaging pregnant women in PA; and (iii) whether different experiences were associated with different levels of confidence in engaging women in PA during pregnancy.

Method

98 EP completed an online survey assessing demographics, experiences and confidence (items adapted from the Self-Confidence in Patient Education for Health Promotion questionnaire (as cited in Tresolini & Stritter, 1994). Independent sample t-tests were used to compare mean scored between groups.



Results

Nearly a quarter of participants (22.4%) admitted to turning away pregnant women on at least one occasion. The majority of participants (83.7%) held an exercise qualification at a minimum of Level 2. EP who had children; were female; those who read about or researched the topic; those who were aware of the current recommendations; those who participated in continuing professional development (CPD) activities involving the topic; and those who held a Level 3 qualification all had significantly ($p < 0.05$) higher total confidence scores.

Exercise professionals who...



had significantly higher total confidence scores



References

- De Vivo, M., & Mills, H. (2019). "They turn to you first for everything": insights into midwives' perspectives of providing physical activity advice and guidance to pregnant women. <https://doi.org/10.31236/osf.io/8uc9z>
- Tresolini, C. P., & Stritter, F. T. (1994). An analysis of learning experiences contributing to medical students' self-efficacy in conducting patient education for health promotion. *Teaching and Learning in Medicine*, 6(4), 247-254.
- UK Chief Medical Officers Recommendations. (2017). Physical Activity in Pregnancy. Bit.ly/startactiveinfo

Conclusion

The findings suggest that fitness qualifications (below Level 3) are not equipping EP with: (1) the knowledge to advise pregnant women regarding the risks/benefits of PA during pregnancy; (2) the skills to convey appropriate PA information to pregnant women; and (3) the confidence to actively engage pregnant women in PA during the early or later stages of pregnancy. Both exercise and health professionals have a role to play in normalising PA behaviour during pregnancy through consistent and clear messages.