

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING FOR THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF OVERWEIGHT IN CHILDREN

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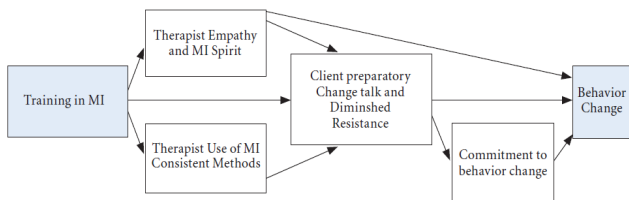
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Background

Prevention of childhood overweight may serve as an early prevention of T2D. Motivational Interviewing (MI) has emerged as a possible approach to modify diet and physical activity behaviour in adults. There is a paucity of studies on the effectiveness of MI for overweight prevention and treatment in children.

This study analyses a project implemented in a Danish municipality in which child healthcare nurses on the basis of a three-session MI intervention with children aged 6-15 and their parents encouraged lifestyle changes to reduce relative weight in children.

Hypothesized Relationships Among Process and Outcome Variables in Motivational Interviewing (MI)



Miller & Rose (2009)

Objectives

To assess the applicability of MI used to modify diet or physical activity behaviours in Danish school aged children and their families.

Methods

In-depth semi-structured interviews with a convenience sample of nine nurses were conducted. The nurses were encouraged to explain their perceptions, experiences and practices of using MI as part of the intervention.

The interviews were based on child cases selected by the nurses. No interviews or observations were conducted directly with the children or the parents.



Results

In general, MI was perceived to be consistent with nurses' values and norms on how child healthcare should work. However, applying MI in a family-addressed intervention posed severe challenges:

- There was no consensus on at what age the MI could be applied with the child and at what age the parents should be involved as well.
- The sessions were sometimes complicated by the fact that the child and the parents had different levels of motivation for change. For instance there were cases where the child was motivated, whereas the parents did not recognise the importance of or were ready to promote healthy lifestyle behaviours with their children.
- Nurses said that they did not have sufficient time to adopt the new skills. Instead, they had to reinvent to fit to the goal of intervention thus removing critical elements from MI.
- Finally, the analysis identified several structural factors that are associated with overweight but which are outside the scope of the MI.

Conclusions

The use of MI in the childhood overweight intervention faced several challenges:

- The method has not been shown to be effective among children before.
- It proved to be problematic to use MI as a tool in consultations with both children and parents who in some cases were not motivated to the same extent.
- The rationale of MI is inherently individualistic (i.e. changing lifestyle), and consequently it does not address the various structural factors that according to state of the art health promotion concepts also play an important role in overweight and obesity.