

Brief opportunistic interventions for weight loss: associations between doctors' intervention style and patient action

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Abstract

Introduction:

Brief interventions for weight loss have been shown to be effective. Results from the brief intervention for weight loss (BWeL) trial showed that patients who were offered free referral to effective weight management programmes by their GP lost an average of 2.4kg at 12 months. Most patients offered a referral did not attend. Perhaps differences in intervention delivery led to differences in attendance, which we aimed to identify here.

Methods:

Conversation analysis (CA) was applied to BWeL audio recordings to explore how doctors endorsed and offered referral to the programme. The association was assessed between GP offer and patient attendance at least once at the weight management programme.

Results:

GPs delivered similar intervention components to inform patients that these programmes were effective and offer referral. However, CA showed that GPs delivered this news using three formats: (1)good (2)bad and (3)neutral. In bad news deliveries GPs used lexical and non-lexical resources to assert the 'problems' of obesity. Conversely, in good news deliveries GPs used these same resources to assert the 'benefits' of weight loss. Neutral news was neither positively or negatively valenced. Multivariable analyses showed that good news delivery was associated with patient attendance (OR 10.43, 95%CI=4.57-23.77, $p < 0.0001$) when compared with neutral news.

Conclusions:

Rather than the presence or absence of certain intervention components, it was the *way* these components were valenced that was associated with patient outcomes. When GPs offer referral to effective weight management programmes, using a 'good news' format is more likely to motivate attendance.

Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)

Patients and members of the public were involved in the BWeL trial steering committee. A group of people with obesity reviewed the results from the conversation analysis work and prioritised the 'good news' style presented here as important for dissemination. We have collaborated with Public Health England to formulate results from this study into a video mediated training resource for clinicians. People with obesity were involved in reviewing the script for this resource, which communicates the 'good news' delivery presented here.