Undergraduate Pharmacy Students’ Engagement with a Behaviour Change Learning Activity

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Why is this research important?

• Human behaviour remains strongest determinant of health related outcomes
• Pharmacists are well placed to provide a public health role in the community
  – Lifestyle behaviours (smoking, diet, exercise, alcohol)
  – Screening / monitoring (cholesterol testing, blood pressure, etc.)
• Important that pharmacists’ education prepares them for this role

  • Pharmacists need to understand the psychology which underpins behaviour change in order to practice effectively
  • Builds on successful adherence to ‘mock-medicines’ learning activity
AIM: To engage pharmacy students in a behaviour change learning activity and to capture their reflections on the learning

METHOD

1) Chose behaviour
- All (n=99) second year undergraduate pharmacy students in one University
- 72% female, age 19-25 years (all ‘home’ students)
- Example provided i.e. eating ‘5-a day’

2) Keep log
- For 1-week
- No behaviour change
  Reflect on behaviours and plan for the next week

3) Start change
- Attend health psychology lecture
- Start behaviour change

4) Attempt behavior change
- Complete the log for 1-week
- Reflect on psychological theories
- Submit form / ethics approval / consent / data anonymised
Key findings

Exercise (n=21)  
Diet (n=20)  

n= 55 / 61 changed their behavior  
(n=10 related to theory)

Liquid consumption (n=14)  
Other - use of social media (n=6)

“Most of my exercise time was performed at the gym. Going with my friend did increase my motivation to exercise” (P23).

“By recording the habit … I could really see how little fruit and veg I ate. This motivated me to really try to eat more in the next week” (P4).

“My locus of control lies with powerful others, such as my parents around me telling me to drink water or eat breakfast” (P43).

“I tried hard to stick to my plan and I was able to make some change. I weighed the benefits and the disadvantages of this behaviour change to motivate me to change this behaviour” (P57).

Theoretical models
- COM-B Model
- Transtheoretical Model
- Health Belief Model
- Theory of Planned Behaviour
- Health Locus of Control
Conclusions

• Two-thirds of students gained real-life experience of attempting to change their behaviour
• Exposure to the challenges faced by the public and patients when trying to adopt healthier lifestyle behaviours
• Small percentage related this to theoretical aspects which underpin behaviour change

• Further feedback from students on perceived value of learning activity
• Use in teaching other health professions?