

Training in motivational interviewing for health professionals to enhance behavioural change skills and establish a network of skilled practitioners



TYPE
STATUS

Program
Fully implemented and ongoing since November 2018

LAST
UPDATE

June 2021

MALTA • NATIONAL
Motivational interviewing training

PROBLEM & OBJECTIVE

PROBLEM There is a lack of local expertise in Motivational Interviewing (MI). MI is a collaborative, goal-oriented and person-centred style of communication with particular attention to the language of change, designed to strengthen personal motivation for and commitment to a specific goal by eliciting and exploring the person's own reasons for change within an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion.

OBJECTIVE

- To prevent and decrease the occurrence of non-communicable diseases (including cancers) by promoting the use of MI techniques to enhance the behavioural change skills of Health Promotion and Disease Directorate (HPDP) staff
- To establish a community of motivational interviewing practitioners and trainers

CONTACT

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KEY COMPONENTS / STEPS

Phase 1: Introductory training (November 2018)

- All HPDP staff members (n = 10) working on noncommunicable disease were invited to attend a 3-day introductory workshop on MI techniques led by a Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT) trainer
- Ten other health professionals who were not members of HPDP staff also attended. These included professional who lead smoking cessation or weight management groups organized by HPDP for the general public

Phase 2: Advanced training (November 2019–February 2020)

- Twenty participants who had completed the introductory training were invited to attend a second 3-day workshop that focused on exploring train-the-trainer techniques, led by the same MINT trainer
- A network of MI practitioners established in Malta
- Online group sessions and one-on-one sessions were organized in January and February 2020
- Sessions interrupted by COVID-19 duties in March 2020

Phase 3: Follow up

- Online sessions set to continue in 2021

KEY CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

- Initiative funded and organized by the HPDP
- HPDP staff identified as key target group for MI training because (Phase 1) they are well-positioned to train other health professionals (i.e., train-the-trainer), and (Phase 2) they regularly conduct health promotion initiatives as part of their duties.
- Initiatives aligned with the objectives of the Healthy Weight for Life Strategy 2012–2020, the Non-communicable Disease Strategy of 2010, the National Cancer Plan 2017–2020 and the overarching goal of HPDP: supporting and empowering individuals to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

MAIN IMPACTS / ADDED VALUE

- The cost of the initiative in terms of time and resources required was deemed to be acceptable, with the introductory and advanced training events consuming 44 hours per participant, and the preparatory time totalling 30 hours over the first two years of the programme.
- Post-workshop evaluation (i.e. via anonymous survey) indicated that training was judged beneficial by all workshop participants
- Three members of HPDP staff and three non-HPDP participants have established a MI network with the aim of applying MI techniques in daily practice and achieving expert certification in the near future.
- MI expertise benefits patients/clients and society as a whole as it may lead to improved non-communicable disease prevention and control outcomes across various health domains (e.g., higher smoking quit rates, better weight management, adolescent substance abuse)

LESSONS LEARNED

- Intense promotion of the 3-day introductory workshop well in advance was essential to encourage participation and allow participants to arrange their schedules.
- Promotion for the advanced (second) MI workshop was less important, but consultation with selected participants and giving advance notice was essential.
- Allowing time (several weeks to months) for HPDP to prepare for the events is key.
- Encouraging ownership of the MI network by participants is important for long-term sustainability and return on investment.
- Outcome measures (e.g., whether participation in the training leads to long-term increase in use of MI techniques) need to be assessed.
- COVID-19 was a significant barrier to continued efforts around MI in Malta (e.g., difficulty switching to online weight management/smoking cessation sessions with clients; fewer visual cues in online sessions) but work in this regard is expected to continue in 2021.

REFERENCES & DOCUMENTATION

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate
Healthy Weight for Life Strategy 2012–2020
Non-communicable Disease Strategy of 2010
National Cancer Plan 2017–2020

European Partnership for Action against Cancer (EPAAC deliverables)
European Guide on Quality National Cancer Control Programmes (2013)
Boosting Innovation and Cooperation in European Cancer Control (2013)

Effectiveness of motivational interviewing interventions for adolescent substance use behavior change: A meta-analytic review.
Motivational interviewing: a systematic review and meta-analysis.
MINT (Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers)

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