

Co-designing a physical activity service for people from refugee and asylum seeking backgrounds





Grace McKeon, Simon Rosenbaum

University of New South Wales, Australia Contact: g.mckeon@unsw.edu.au Twitter: @mckeon_grace

This project was proudly funded by the NSW Government through the Refugee Health Flexible Fund 2021-22 to 2022-23

Background

- People from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds resettling in Australia have often been exposed to potentially traumatic events before and after their displacement.
- Subsequently- high rates of mental health problems including PTSD.
- Physical activity can improve symptoms of PTSD and comorbid physical health conditions, however there are limited programs tailored for this population.
- So how do we promote physical activity which is safe, inclusive and culturally appropriate?

Methods

- Experience-based co-design framework
- Interviews and focus groups conducted at a community centre in Sydney, Australia to understand the needs and priorities for service provision with:
 - Service users (refugees and asylum) seekers)
 - Service providers (e.g., psychologist, lawyer)

One-one-one interviews with service users and service providers

Development of trigger film representing key themes

Service user focus group

Service provider focus group

Feedback findings

Implementation

Results

- N=16 participants (N=8 service users and N=8 service providers) took part over 12months
- Aged 28 years (SD=11.0) and the time since being in Australia ranged 6 months 10 years.
- Overall participants were less active since migrating to Australia due to competing stressors.
- Workshops resulted in 6 key priorities for service provision.





- Staff cultural capability training
- Women only times and spaces
- Engage with bicultural workers/community leaders to build trust and assist with referrals
- Establish referral pathways to existing mental health services
- Staff mental health and trauma
- Safe environment- colours, music
- Free or reduced cost
- Outreach or co-location with other services - e.g., childcare
- Partner with existing services and establish referral pathways
- Translated written materials about other services
- Co-located with other services

Conclusion

The subsequent evaluation of the program, guided by the 6 priorities is ongoing.

- Physical activity 5 literacy
- Social and community connectedness
- Employ health professionals who can tailor exercises to needs
- Build capability among community leaders
- Designed and led by the
- community
- Offer group-based programs that are social and fun