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Communicating the benefits of population health interventions: the health effects can be on par with those of medication

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ABSTRACT (249 words)

How can we communicate to the public that population level health interventions are effective at improving health? Perhaps the most familiar “currency” of effect is that which can be brought about via medication. Comparisons of effect sizes may be effective ways of communicating the benefits of public health interventions if they are seen and understood in the same way that medications are. We developed a series of comparisons to communicate benefits of public health interventions in terms of similar gains to be obtained from statins, metformin and antihypertensive medications for prevention of cardiovascular events, type 2 diabetes, obesity and hypertension. A purposive search identified evidence of public health intervention-related benefits. This evidence ranged from meta-analyses of RCTs to that from observational cohort studies. Public health interventions included implementation of national smoke free legislation, enhanced neighbourhood walkability, increased opportunities for active travel and protection of urban green space. In some cases, the benefits of public health interventions were found to be equivalent to, or even outweighed those of the medications to which they were compared. For example, RCT-based evidence suggested that exercise taken with a view of a

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