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## Short Communication

# The reach, adoption, and effectiveness of online training for healthcare professionals



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Traditionally, the continued professional development of healthcare professionals has been completed through classroom-based educational courses, workshops, and conferences. These can prove costly and time intensive. Online learning is becoming increasingly common, is easy to access, and can save learners' time which is important in a healthcare system where job demands are high and study leave is limited. Well-designed internet-based learning has been shown to be as effective as traditional classroom-based learning in the skill and knowledge development of healthcare professionals,<sup>1</sup> however the reach, adoption, and effectiveness of such training is largely underreported in the literature.

This short communication reports on evaluation data from delivery of a 60-min online training session to healthcare professionals, between January and November 2016.

## The online training

The online training was developed by Webb, Foster, and Poulter (2016)<sup>2</sup> to overcome an identified knowledge gap in nurses regarding the importance of physical activity for cancer patients.<sup>3</sup> Healthcare professionals are expected to give

lifestyle advice<sup>4</sup> yet in a UK survey of 15,524 colorectal cancer patients, only 31% recall receiving such advice.<sup>5</sup>

Developed using behaviour change theory,<sup>6</sup> the training, with associated follow-up, aims to improve the capability, opportunity, and the motivation of nurses to give very brief advice on physical activity to their cancer patients. Details of training development and feasibility have been reported previously.<sup>2,7</sup> The original training was designed specifically for nurses; however, a recommendation from the feasibility study was that it be open to all healthcare professionals engaging with cancer patients.<sup>2</sup>

Online seminar technology is used to deliver the training, providing a virtual medium for peer-to-peer interaction, important for learner engagement, and social learning.<sup>8</sup> All healthcare professionals attending the online training are asked to complete a baseline survey on their discussions of physical activity with cancer patients, rating discussions as 0–25% of the time, 26–50%, 51–75%, or 76–100% of the time. A similar survey is administered again 12 weeks later to monitor changes in the frequency of discussions on physical activity.

The capability, opportunity, and the motivation of learners to raise physical activity with their cancer patients are measured using a 10-item survey administered at the end of the training. This uses a 5-point Likert Scale, with 5 representing a strong agreement to improvements because of the training, and 1 representing a strong disagreement.

## The RE-AIM framework

The RE-AIM framework<sup>9</sup> has been used to analyse the evaluation data in the following way:-

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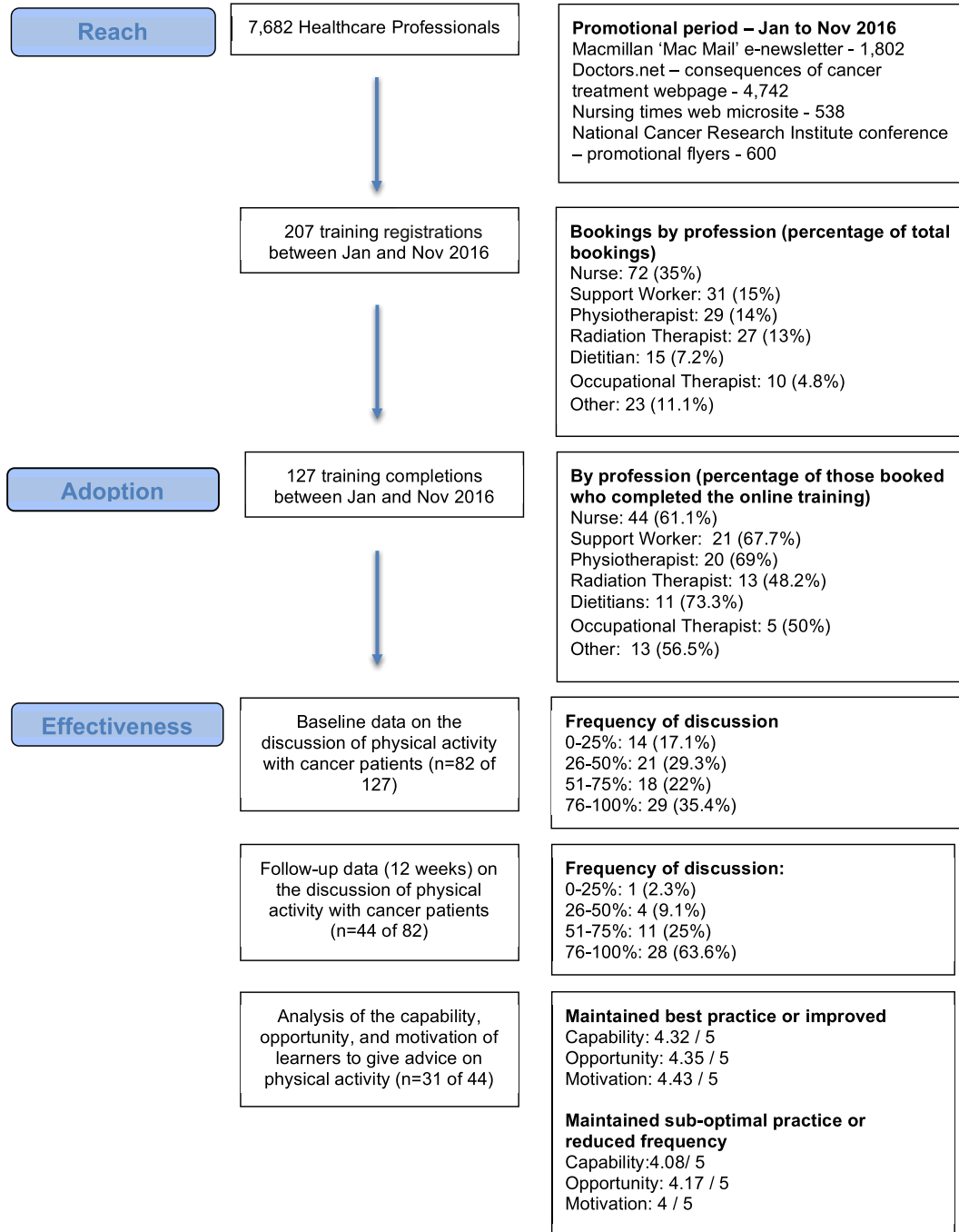
- The REACH of the training is reported in relation to the contacts made from promotional activity and subsequent bookings, and training completions.
- The EFFECTIVENESS of the training is assessed from the self-reported changes in the frequency of discussions of physical activity with cancer patients before, and 12 weeks after training completion. These results are reported in relation to the capability, opportunity, and motivation of learners to give physical activity advice.
- The ADOPTION of the training relates to the bookings received from specific healthcare professions.

- The IMPLEMENTATION and MAINTENANCE domains of the RE-AIM framework are not covered within this communication.

The analysis of these areas is presented in Fig. 1.

**Reach**

The training was promoted throughout the 11-month period from January to November 2016. It was promoted



**Fig. 1 – The reach, adoption, and effectiveness of online training to improve discussions on physical activity by healthcare professionals to cancer patients.**

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