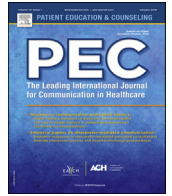




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Review article

Factors associated with physical activity promotion by allied and other non-medical health professionals: A systematic review

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To identify factors associated with non-medical health professionals' engagement in physical activity (PA) promotion.

Methods: Five electronic databases were searched for studies including practising health professionals (excluding medical doctors), a PA promotion practice measure, a test of association between potential influencing factors and PA promotion practice, and written in English. Two researchers independently screened studies and extracted data. Extracted data were synthesized in a tabular format with a narrative summary (thematic analysis).

Results: Thirty studies involving 7734 non-medical health professionals were included. Self-efficacy in PA promotion, positive beliefs in the benefits of PA, assessing patients' PA, and PA promotion training were the main factors associated with engaging in PA promotion. Lack of remuneration was not associated. Common study limitations included a lack of information on non-responders, data collection by survey only and limited reliability or validity testing of measurements.

Conclusions: There are common factors influencing PA promotion, but the absence of studies from some health professions, limitations related to study measures, and the lack of randomised controlled intervention trials highlights the need for further research.

Practice Implications: The factors identified may prove useful for guiding the development of strategies to encourage greater engagement in PA promotion by health professionals.

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1. Introduction

Physical inactivity continues to be a leading cause of the burden of disease and mortality globally [1]. Yet, one-third of adults do not reach the levels of physical activity (PA) recommended in public health guidelines [2]. Considering the magnitude of the problem of inactivity, optimising management of this important risk factor must be a priority concern for all health professionals.

National and international organisations encourage health professionals to promote PA to their patients [3,4] and there are many opportunities within the health care sector to assess and counsel patients on PA [5]. Many patients attribute responsibility for promoting increased PA to health professionals and are keen for their support [6].

The World Health Organisation advises that health professionals screen patients for levels of PA at every primary care consultation and

also provide brief, structured counselling for insufficiently active patients, particularly those with diseases or conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, some cancers, or arthritis [7]. It is recommended that the advice be delivered by a broad range of primary care professionals, not only general practitioners [8,9]. However, there is reluctance by many health professionals to engage in PA promotion with their patients [10,11].

Studies of PA promotion by healthcare professionals to date have predominantly focused on medical doctors rather than on allied and other non-medical health professions [12–14]. One systematic review [15] that included a wide range of health professionals was confined to the primary care setting but, many allied and other non-medical health professions, including nurses, work in settings outside of primary care and their PA promotion behaviours may not have been captured by previous systematic reviews.

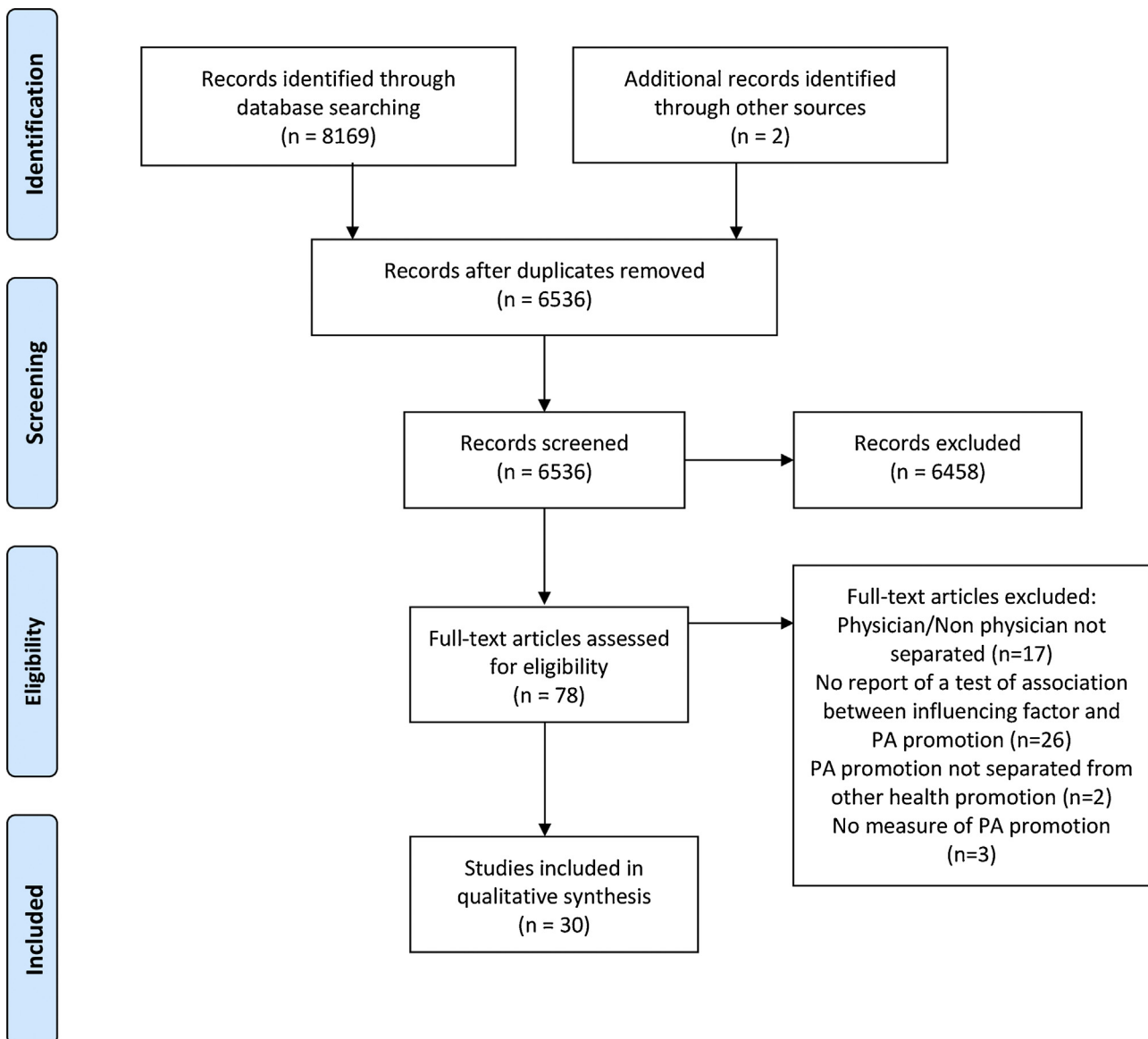


Fig. 1. Flow chart showing the number of papers identified, included and excluded at each stage of the review process.

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