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Employee perceptions of a pedometer walking intervention in a hospital workplace

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Background: Pedometer-based interventions are showing promise in workplace settings although little is known about participant's perceptions of such schemes in the healthcare workplace.

Methods: Data from exit questionnaires (n=296) was used to determine demographic characteristics of those who take part, and to examine employees' experiences of a 6-week workplace pedometer-based ion in a hospital setting.

Results: This intervention was accessed by predominantly female healthcare employees of all ages and all occupational groups, although the vast majority were in nursing, allied health professions or office-based sedentary job roles. One third of participants did not meet recommended levels of physical activity at the outset, and more than half of the participants were overweight or obese. Social support to engage in the intervention came mostly from work colleagues. Almost all completed the programme and strategies for increasing step-counts were self-selected and diverse. Barriers to engagement varied but most commonly included lack of time or technical difficulties with the pedometer. Benefits of programme participation were reported irrespective of prior level of physical activity. Participants described the pedometer intervention as useful for self-monitoring and goal setting and were motivated by the competitive element and being part of a team. Participant's generally valued the concept of interventions for health offered by their employer.

Conclusions: Pedometer-based physical activity promotion is well-received by healthcare employees and delivery is feasible within a multi-site hospital Trust. Healthcare organisations should offer interventions which encourage physical activity amongst employees, particularly those with a group-based component.