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A multi-centre Trial of physical Activity assisted Reduction of Smoking (TARS): Baseline characteristics, and health trainer led intervention engagement

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Abstract

Smoking reduction has little health benefit but can increase quit attempts and abstinence. Physical activity reduces cigarette craving and may promote smoking reduction.

Methods

915 smokers wishing to reduce but not quit smoking were recruited through community and primary/secondary care across 4 UK sites. They were randomised to usual care or usual care plus ≤ 8 sessions of client-centred behavioural support. The primary outcome is floating prolonged 6 month biochemically verified abstinence at 9 month follow-up. Intervention engagement was recorded via a bespoke online system. We report the baseline sample characteristics, and explored factors associated with number of sessions using multiple regression.

Results

Overall, the sample were 55.4% female, 84.9% white British, had a mean (SD) age 49.8(13.9) years, and smoked 18.0(13.4) cigarettes per day. 5.1% reported using smoking cessation medication and 9.8% vaped. Intervention participants received a mean (SD; range across sites) 4.8 sessions (3.4; 3.5-6.8), and 76% (58-89% across sites) had ≥ 2 sessions. Half the sessions were face to face and half by telephone, with a mean (SD) duration of 46.3 (18.0) minutes and 20.9 (13.1) minutes, respectively. The proportion attending 2 or more intervention sessions differed by site but no baseline characteristics were associated with engagement.

Conclusions and implications

This trial is the first to assess the effects of a multiple behaviour change intervention on smoking abstinence among smokers wishing to reduce but not quit. Intervention engagement was generally good, and further work should help to understand why it differed across sites.

Keywords

Physical activity, smoking, health behaviour change, health trainer