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Gray, C.M., Mutrie, N., Anderson, A.S., Hunt, K., Treweek, S.,
and Wyke, S. (2012) *I Always Knew I had the Fitness in Me, It Was Just
Getting it Oot was the Pain: Can Professional Football Clubs Help Fans
Become More Active?* In: ICSEMIS 2012, 19-24 July 2012, Glasgow,
UK.

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/69635/>

Deposited on: 5 November 2012

Abstract Title (max 150 chars)

I Always Knew I had the Fitness in me, it was Just Getting it out Was the Pain: Can Professional Football Clubs Help Fans Become More Active?

Abstract Text (max 2000 chars)

BACKGROUND: Fewer than half of men aged 35-65 in the UK meet national physical activity (PA) recommendations (39% in England; 44% in Scotland). This national inactivity has important implications for public health; increasing risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, cancer and premature mortality. Football Fans in Training (FFIT) is a gender-sensitised, weight loss and PA intervention delivered to overweight and obese men by coaches at Scottish Premier League football clubs. Twelve group sessions provide individualised diet and PA advice, including an incremental pedometer-based daily walking programme and weekly coach-led pitch-side training sessions.

AIMS: To explore participant response to FFIT and to assess its potential to increase PA.

METHODS: A mixed-method feasibility study included a process evaluation involving participant focus groups and interviews at 12 weeks and 6 months, and a pilot randomised trial with men (aged 35-65, BMI \geq 27kg/m²) randomised to intervention (N=51) or waiting-list comparison (N=52) groups in two clubs. PA was measured using the International PA Questionnaire Short Form and before-and-after pedometer diaries.

RESULTS: Themes emerging from the process evaluation included: the appeal of the football setting, appreciation of the group camaraderie and enjoying incorporating walking into daily routine. Some men would have felt uncomfortable joining a gym; others had been apprehensive about becoming more active. Most felt fitter, and being more active was important for continued weight management. PA increased significantly in the intervention, but not comparison, group at 12 weeks (Mdn increase=1179 vs 0 MET-min/wk, p=.001) and was maintained to 6 months (Mdn increase=868 MET-min/wk, p<.05). Average daily step counts increased by 4442 (SE 656, p<.001) over the 12 weeks.

CONCLUSION: Professional football clubs can help men who may be reluctant to engage in other PA programmes become more active and maintain this over 6 months.