Engaging peers, parents and pupils to increase physical activity among adolescents

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S06-1 Putting young people at the heart of physical activity research design: The Walking In Schools (WISH) Study

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Background
Regular physical activity is associated with physiological and mental health benefits for adolescents including improved fitness and cardiometabolic health, increased muscle and bone strength and reduced risk of obesity. Despite this, globally, many adolescents (81%) fail to meet physical activity guidelines. Physical activity levels decline as children move into adolescence and through to adulthood and may affect the likelihood of developing chronic health conditions. It is recognised that parental support and friendship networks play an important role in attenuating declines in physical activity during adolescence and it is vital that we develop effective interventions to help adolescents stay active.

Aim
This symposium will engage policymakers, professionals, scientists and stakeholders to discuss research projects on Engaging peers, parents and pupils to increase physical activity among adolescents. The goals of this symposium are to highlight the challenges and ongoing work to address suboptimal levels of physical activity in this population and disseminate the results of novel physical activity interventions to develop knowledge and understanding. This symposium will share experiences, learning and best practice in Patient and Public Involvement (PPI), transitioning from formative research to feasibility testing and upscaling interventions and it will also allow for debate and to identify gaps and priority areas for physical activity among adolescents.

Symposia presentations
1. Putting young people at the heart of physical activity research design: The Walking In Schools (WISH) Study
Background
Young people have the right to be informed and consulted about decisions affecting their lives. Youth Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) should be encouraged to ensure research is carried out 'with' or 'by' young people rather than 'to', 'about' or 'for' them. PPI can ensure research is relevant, results are accessible and recruitment rates are improved. Young people have had limited involvement in the design, implementation and dissemination of public health research and there have been calls for a greater focus on youth PPI in research.

Methods
Following the WISH feasibility study that consulted young people pre and post-intervention, a Youth Advisory Group (YAG) was set up within the main trial. The WISH study is a clustered randomised controlled trial in which a peer-led, school-based, brisk walking intervention is compared to usual physical activity in adolescent females. The YAG was introduced to inform intervention delivery and provide researchers with an understanding of what would encourage/discourage participation. Schools were asked to invite pupils aged 12-14 years (participants) and 15-18 years (walk leaders). Participative methods were used to develop and review study documentation. The YAG completed a short questionnaire and recruitment rates were monitored.

Results
Fourteen pupils from 3 schools attended the 2019 YAG meeting. The YAG agreed the meeting was a good way of getting young people involved in research (93%) and attendees enjoyed the meeting (100%). As a result, changes were made to study documentation, incentives were purchased and recruitment materials developed. Participant recruitment was higher in schools who participated in the YAG (54%) compared to those who did not (47%). In 2021 the second YAG occurred and 1 teacher, 12 participants and 10 walk leaders from 2 schools provided feedback on the trials COVID-19 contingency plan. The girls felt their feedback was valued (100%) and it was important young people had the chance to contribute to research studies (100%).

Conclusions
The views of young people have been central to the development of the WISH Study and although youth PPI is not without challenges, there are many benefits for researchers, the study and the young people involved.

Keywords: Patient and Public Involvement, PPI, Young People, Physical Activity