



Integrated Brief Interventions of Co-existing Risk Factors Aiming at Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases (NCD)

The new WHO BRIEF manual for primary care is a major step towards integrated intervention of co-existing NCD risk factors

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There are many national and international guidelines and recommendations for intervention towards NCD risk factors targeted one risk factor, separately, e.g., quit smoking or begin exercising. This is a challenge because many people have co-existing risk factors, the so-called SNAP factors: Smoking, nutrition, alcohol and physical activity. Thus, people with co-existing risk factors may have to follow different stand-alone interventions, as the guidelines do seldom fit together as one integrated program. Unfortunately, this leads to more complex interventions than needed, requires an extra coordination by the people themselves and may even be more resource consuming for the healthcare without benefitting from the obvious synergy from integrated interventions.

There are, however, great examples of multifactorial intensive programs with high effect among patients already suffering from NCDs and still having risk factors responsible for aggravation of their disease. They involve rehabilitation from chronic diseases (2), including diabetic rehabilitation (3). Similarly all-inclusive programs are developed for prehabilitation aiming at preoperative risk reduction by lifestyle improvement among surgical patients (4).

Now the time has come to meet the needs for the integration of brief intervention targeting prevention of several co-existing NCD risk factors, and the new and comprehensive WHO BRIEF manual for primary care would be an important tool to support this work (1).

The BRIEF manual

This manual is developed for primary care in its widest definition to reach most of the population across the life-course and build on the ongoing relationship with patients. Other benefits by the primary health care include already established intersectoral, community and policy-advocating interactions – all for the benefit of the individual as well as for the society at large.

The manual describes the evidence for brief interventions aiming at integrated SNAP intervention in primary care settings. It recommends relevant structures necessary for the primary care to deliver the brief intervention as implementation and continuity in real life needs more than enthusiasm and positive attitudes. The manual further describes monitoring and evaluation including the results obtained at local, regional, and national level and exemplify it by using the RE-AIM Framework (5).



Research and Best Practice

Programs for capacity building are also included. In addition, the manual includes practical guidance and much more supplemental material to support the implementation (1).

The perspectives

The perspectives of preventing NCDs are tremendous. In the European Region alone, 9 of 10 deaths are caused by NCDs and amongst those 8 of 10 are caused by the SNAP factors (6). The prevention is crucial in a time of short resources and integrated SNAP intervention is crucial to meet the people of today in real life.

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