A dietary history pro forma – does this help students and teaching practices raise and address obesity in General Practice?

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Introduction

Behavioural change interventions in and around obesity are challenging. Although the NICE guidelines\textsuperscript{a} provide clear evidence-based advice, our research shows there is poor adherence to the guidelines at the behavioural intervention stage, partly because this is perceived as a taboo topic but also because clinicians may have had little teaching on obesity-related health promotion in their own undergraduate training\textsuperscript{b,c}.

Can this simple tool help students and teaching practices address this issue?

What we did

120 reflective accounts of final year students’ consultations with obese patients during their GP rotation were analysed using NVivo. 60 of these students had access to (but limited teaching on) ‘A Dietary History’ by Paul Booton.

What we found out

Most students only felt comfortable talking about obesity if the topic was raised by the patient, or if the patient presented with obesity-related pathology. Only 18% of students broaching the topic opportunistically and 69% of students eliciting no information about their patient’s diet giving generic ‘eat less’ advice.

Did ‘A Dietary History’ help?

Students that used ‘A Dietary History’ felt it helped them broach the topic and said it provided useful basis for planning and advice. Students that elicited dietary histories were able to offer more personalised advice. Importantly, students who had successfully broached the topic (or seen their GP tutor do it) felt more confident doing it again.

What we intend to do next

This year’s cohort of 500 final year students will get specific teaching on this tool, including a workshop and role play. We will run a workshop for GP tutors and will continue to provide training on this issue. We will re-analyse this year’s reflective accounts to see whether the proportion of students raising this issue opportunistically has increased.

References

\textsuperscript{a}National Institute for Clinical Excellence Guideline CG43 Obesity December 2006.