

PPI Case study:

Running an advisory group for the RE-MAP Study (Replacing Meat with Alternative Protein Sources).

Summary

Excessive meat consumption can increase the risk of some chronic conditions and negatively affect the natural environment. Filippo Bianchi and colleagues were developing a behavioural intervention to help people eat less meat by providing free meat substitutes, an educational booklet about the benefits of eating less meat, low-meat recipes, and vignettes of success stories of people who reduced their meat consumption.

The purpose

The aim was to get some public views on the research at a very early stage of the planning. Ten adult volunteers participated in an advisory group to help improve the Re-MAP intervention. The advisory group provided feedback about each of the four intervention components:

1. *What meat alternatives should we offer as part of the intervention?*
2. *Were the information leaflets engaging and easy to understand?*
3. *Were the success stories inspiring?*
4. *What cookbooks should be given as part of the intervention?*

Who?

The session was advertised through the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences contact list. From the applicants, people were chosen to represent both meat eaters and meat reducers. The meeting was held in an Oxford college to make it a pleasant location.

What was done (and what worked!)

The advisory group met on a Saturday to enable working aged volunteers to attend. We provided some of the meat substitutes for people to try and that worked well. We gave them signs with which they expressed whether

they thought the products were 'YUMMY', 'JUST OKAY', or 'NOT GOOD'?

Timescales

The workshop was a two-hour, one off event. It was held on a day agreed amongst the group that would be the most convenient, and participants were paid for their time, for their travel costs, and provided with tea, coffee and lunch.

The difference your PPI made

Feedback from the PPI Contributors on the four elements resulted in the following changes:

1. *We expanded the range of meat substitutes to ensure participants will not grow bored of the products, we included vegetable-based meat alternatives, like patties made of pulses, and not only 'fake meats' like Quorn, and we referred to the products as 'meat alternatives' rather than 'meat substitutes' in our educational material.*
2. *The PPI Contributors thought the information booklet was visually attractive, interesting, and motivating. To further improve it, the PPI group encouraged us to simplify some graphs summarising the health benefits of eating less meat, emphasise more the positive consequences of eating less meat, outline more clearly what a healthy and balanced diet looks like, and rephrase the text to be less academic.*
3. *After reading the vignettes, the PPI group advised us to include one vignette of a person who reduced meat consumption for reasons related to ethics and animal welfare, rather than only including stories of people driven by health and environmental motivations.*
4. *The advisory group was asked to go through the different vegetarian and low-meat cookbooks. They did not have a strong opinion on any of the presented*

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options. As such, we decided to include the cookbook with the lowest cost aiming to maximise the cost-effectiveness of the intervention.

The PPI group also helped us make important decisions for the procedural aspects of the study. In particular, they helped us to: determine an appropriate compensation for prospective study participants, determine how to compensate participants in the control condition, who will not receive the benefits of the intervention, define where and how to advertise the trial, review the questionnaires we set out to use and rephrase the questions to become more understandable and relevant for people's everyday life.

What was learnt?

This was my first experience of doing PPI. At first it was difficult to not jump at defending the decision we made for the trial and simply assimilate the constructive feedback of the panel.

I was surprised by how much people had prepared in advance. They all had lots of questions and there was certainly no issue with trying to get them to contribute. With hindsight I would have allocated more than two hours to the meeting.

Overall, I thought it went really well and I look forward to future PPI work.

What people said

"It is the most fun I have had at one of these types of groups"

Conclusions and what next?

These PPI Contributors were recruited for this early input into the project and have agreed to maintain their input throughout the whole project.

They were all happy to provide input remotely.

Contact details

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Claudia Dorsel acted as scribe and Fabio Digiacommo took photos for disseminating this work, both of which were invaluable.

Photos from the day:

