THE WEIGHTY ISSUE OF OBESITY: A SMART (PHONE) SOLUTION.
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Background

By 2025, 75% of Australians will be overweight or obese [1]. Prevalence has increased despite widely publicised healthy lifestyle information. Recent research suggests that people who are shown visual representations of their future self may be strongly motivated to adopt healthy behaviour [2,3]. We propose a novel tool, in the form of a smartphone App for sustaining motivation in people intending to lose weight.

Aims/objective

To determine if a personalised future self-image can enhance weight loss by increasing motivation to adhere to a diet and exercise regimen.

Methods/approach

A randomised control trial with crossover design was conducted. Participants age 16+ were recruited through general practice and community. They were randomised at baseline to receive time-progressed self-images either immediately or after eight weeks. Images were generated by calculating a change in BMI based on daily calorie intake and exercise level, using a smartphone App called Future Me®. General information was provided to all participants at baseline on where to find healthy lifestyle and weight loss information, however no specific diet or exercise program was prescribed. Weight loss in each group was recorded over 16 weeks.

Results/findings

Weight change from weeks 0-8, and weeks 8-16 were calculated for each participant and compared between groups. The proportions of participants that lost weight during each phase were also compared between groups. Regression analysis of baseline characteristics was performed.

Discussion

The findings are discussed in light of the current evidence and the next phase of the trial. Motivating lifestyle change is critical to reversing the rising trend of obesity. The approach to weight loss in this trial proposes a creative, evidence-inspired partnership between primary care, patient and new technology.

References