Taking an evidence-based approach when there is a lack of evidence

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COVID-19 preventative behaviours

- Hand washing
- Not touching face
- Greeting without touching
- Self-isolating with symptoms
- Self-isolating if at risk (family member has symptoms or asked to by test, trace and isolate)
- Physical (social) distancing

- Wearing a face covering
- Limiting contact with people outside household
- Working from home
- Testing for COVID
- Reporting COVID symptoms/test results (test trace and isolate)
- Downloading and using COVID-19 app
Key questions

• What interventions work to help people to adhere to key behaviours?
• Do we need different interventions for different population groups and in different contexts?
• How can we deliver these interventions in the COVID-19 context?
Evidence base

- Behaviours often in other non-COVID contexts
- Research done outside UK
- New COVID-specific behaviours
- Behaviours across different population groups/different contexts

- Reported outcomes are often not behavioural
  - knowledge or beliefs about x
  - intentions to do x
  - (self-reported behaviour)
Common misconceptions about changing behaviour

• It's all common sense
  – people make sensible choices
  – behaviour is easy to change

• It's about getting the message across
  – understand and identify with the message

• Knowledge and information drive behaviour

• People act rationally
  – emotions
  – unconscious processes

• People act irrationally
  – people have their reasons

• It is possible to predict accurately
  – at the level of the individual

COM-B:
A generic model of behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capability</th>
<th>Opportunity</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical capability:</td>
<td>Physical opportunity:</td>
<td>Reflective motivation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical skill, strength or</td>
<td>Opportunity from the environment: time, resources,</td>
<td>What we want or intend to do and our beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stamina</td>
<td>locations, physical cues</td>
<td>about what is good or bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological capability:</td>
<td>Social opportunity:</td>
<td>Automatic motivation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological skills, strength</td>
<td>Opportunity from others, social cues and cultural</td>
<td>Emotional reactions, desires, impulses,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or stamina to engage in</td>
<td>norms that influence how we think about things</td>
<td>inhibitions, drives, reflex responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>psychological processes</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Which behaviour(s)?

- What would people be doing differently if the issue were resolved?
  - what behaviour needs to change?
  - where does the behaviour happen?
  - when does it need to happen?
  - who is doing the behaviour?

- Problems can result from a combination of behaviours
  - identify a suitable target
Hygiene practices

• Self-reported behaviours:
  – touching eyes or mouth
  – washing hands with soap and water more often
  – using hand sanitizing gel
  – using disinfectants to wash surfaces in your home
  – covering nose and mouth with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing.

• All three COM-B components significantly predicted good hygienic practices
  – automatic motivation and physical opportunity negatively influenced behaviour
  – psychological capability, social opportunity, and reflective motivation positively influenced behaviour

• Interventions should focus on:
  – increasing and maintaining motivation
  – self-regulatory processes involving planning and goal setting.
Informing a COM-B analysis

- Previous research findings or reviews (same or similar behaviours)
- Interviews, focus groups or surveys
- Observation - what are people doing in the relevant contexts?
- 'Secret shopper'/service safari - what is it like for you?
How to promote change?

- Not all about changing the individual
- Environmental/social planning
- Communication/marketing
- Guidelines, Legislation and Regulation
- Service provision
- Fiscal measures

The Behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. Michie et al. 2011
http://www.implementationscience.com/content/6/1/42/
Promoting changes in Capability

- Training or classes to gain physical or psychological (e.g. strength, stamina or planning) skills
- Education to gain knowledge
- Provide services or support to make the behaviour easier to do
Promoting changes in Opportunity

- Change the environment or provide resources
- Provide opportunities to learn
- Provide examples for people to imitate/aspire to
- Create rules/laws to reduce opportunity
Promoting changes in Motivation

- Change the environment or provide resources
- Provide examples for people to imitate/aspire to
- Create costs for not doing the behaviour
- Offer rewards for the behaviour
- Education to increase understanding
- Provide services or support to make the behaviour feel easier to do
- Induce positive or negative feelings about the behaviour
Promoting changes in handwashing

- Education about the importance of handwashing for reduced infection
- Training in how to wash hands thoroughly
- Show role models/‘people like me’ following guidance
- Providing places to wash hands/hand sanitizer
- Support to make plans for exactly when, where and how to wash hands
- Ask people to think about the regret they would feel if they passed on an infection to others
Matching the solution to the problem

**Breast cancer screening**
- Research showed barriers were: lack of time, fear, pain and embarrassment
- Intervention messages in letters:
  - cost of missed appointments
  - deadline for screening
  - control
- No effect in a trial of >39,000 women

**Medication adherence**
- Research shows a wide range of barriers: beliefs about medication, identity, side effects, forgetting
- Intervention:
  - 3 types of pill box reminder
  - control
- No effect in a trial of >50,000 people


Evaluation

• How many people accessed/saw the intervention?
• Acceptability/satisfaction of the intervention?
• Changes in Capability, Opportunity and Motivation (intention)?
• Changes in self-reported behaviour?
• Changes in objective behaviour?
Additional resources

- [https://theoryandtechniquetool.humanbehaviourchange.org/tool](https://theoryandtechniquetool.humanbehaviourchange.org/tool) [online tool linking barriers to behaviour change techniques]
Thanks

email: cebsap@shu.ac.uk

https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/specialisms/centre-for-behavioural-science-and-applied-psychology

Behavioural Insights Framework  RM6004

email: behaviouralinsights@shu.ac.uk

http://behaviouralscienceconsortium.org/

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