Background

• Childhood obesity is a major public health issue in Australia¹.
• The PEACH™ family-focussed child weight management program is one of few programs to demonstrate effectiveness, with significant and sustainable reductions in children’s degree of overweight and improvements in lifestyle (diet and activity) behaviours².
• Typically parents do not recognise their child as overweight until in the obese range, making a return to healthy weight difficult³.
• The current face-to-face format limits accessibility, and barriers to engagement, attendance and retention of families have been experienced⁴.
• Parents value the program content and sharing, peer support, guidance, and individual interaction with the facilitator that occur in the group setting.
• With increasing digital technologies, the translation of PEACH™ to be delivered online, to increase access and engagement, is possible.

Aim

To determine the feasibility of an online PEACH™ program. This pilot study will trial the processes required to deliver a facilitated online group intervention, PEACH™ Lifestyle, targeting families with a primary-school child (irrespective of child weight), wishing to improve their family’s lifestyle behaviours.

Methods

• PEACH™ Lifestyle will use an online platform (“FLO (Flinders Learning Online) Live”) to deliver the program to families of pre-adolescent children (irrespective of child weight) in South Australia (SA).
• “FLO Live” is a web-based communication software tool that allows ‘real-time’ communication between a facilitator and community members.
• The 4-month program involves parents viewing 3 x 10-minute videos and then participating in 4 x 1-hour interactive online sessions held every 3 weeks and led by a trained PEACH™ facilitator.
• Between sessions support is provided through an online Facebook community monitored by the facilitator.
• Families (n=25-30, 3 groups) are currently being recruited across SA.

Process Evaluation

Evaluation measures will include satisfaction with the program (content, delivery, materials and support); barriers to participation; self-perceived computer ability; confidence in making family healthy lifestyle changes; suggested program improvements and interest in further support.

Discussion

• This evidence based program¹ provides practice advice and strategies to parents and carers about healthy eating options and ways to increase physical activity in their children.
• It adheres to recommendations of a systematic review of interventions for treating obesity in children⁵ and is consistent with the movement towards using online technologies in health interventions⁶.
• While healthy lifestyle programs currently exist on-line, there is a paucity of data available to inform their design, few are interactive and to our knowledge, none are facilitated by a professional.
• Results of this pilot will inform the development of a more comprehensive PEACH™ Lifestyle online program with respect to content elements that enhance engagement, and features required for wider roll out.

Conclusion

Delivering PEACH™ Lifestyle online will increase the accessibility and reach of the program. This pilot project will evaluate the process of online delivering and inform a larger intervention which will be evaluated for: effectiveness in changing families’ lifestyle behaviours (impact evaluation of knowledge, skills, behaviours and confidence) and weight status (maintaining or achieving healthy weight status as appropriate) (outcome evaluation).

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References

6. Hutchesson MJ et al. Obes Rev. 2015; 16(5); 376-92