

Title of Intervention and Website: Can Inexpensive Signs Encourage the Use of Stairs?

Intervention Strategies: Campaigns and Promotions

Purpose of the Intervention: To test the effectiveness of signs to encourage use of stairs instead of elevators

Population: Adults living in Baltimore, suburban shopping mall patrons

Setting: Shopping center; community-based

Partners: None mentioned

Intervention Description:

- Campaigns and Promotions: There were two intervention phases each involving the use of a sign placed on an easel beside the escalator and stairs. The health benefits sign of the first phase featured a caricature of a heart at the top of a flight of stairs and the statement: "Your heart needs exercise, use the stairs." The weight-control message of the second intervention phase featured a sign with a caricature of a woman at the top of a flight of stairs with a thin waistline and large pants and read, "Improve your waistline, use the stairs."

Theory: Not mentioned

Resources Required:

- Staff/Volunteers: not mentioned
- Training: reliable categorization in race, age, sex and weight
- Technology: not mentioned
- Space: inconspicuous spot at the foot of the steps and escalator to perform observations
- Budget: not mentioned
- Intervention: poster and easel
- Evaluation: observer

Evaluation:

- Design: observational/convenience
- Methods and Measures: baseline phase and two intervention phases: frequency of stair use compared with use of adjacent escalator recorded along with sex, ethnicity (black, white, other), age (over/under 40), overweight/normal weight

Outcomes:

- Short term Impact: Overall stair use increased from 4.8% to 6.9 % and 7.2% with the health benefits and weight-control signs, respectively.
 - Younger persons increased stair use from 4.6% to 6.0% and 6.1%
 - Older person almost doubled stair use from 5.1% to 8.1% and 8.7%
 - White persons increased stair use from 5.1% to 7.5% and 7.8%
 - Black persons decreased stair use from 4.1% to 3.4% and increased to 5.0%
 - Normal-weight persons increased stair use from 5.4% to 7.2% and 6.9%
 - Overweight persons increased stair use from 3.8% to 6.3% and 7.8%
- Long Term Impact: not measured

Maintenance: Not mentioned

Lessons Learned: Simple, inexpensive interventions can increase physical activity. Research is needed to identify effective motivators to promote activity among black persons.

Citation(s):

Andersen, R. E., S. C. Franckowiak, et al. (1998). "Can inexpensive signs encourage the use of stairs? Results from a community intervention." *Ann Intern Med* 129(5): 363-9.

