

Impact of mass-media campaigns on physical activity

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What is already known on this topic

Background

The International Society for Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) has formulated eight investments that work for promoting PA. Mass-media, the core of public education, is one of these investments and aims to raise awareness, transmit consistent and clear messages, and change social norms, to improve population physical activity (PA).

What is known?

- Many reviews performed on the topic of effectiveness of media campaigns
- The available reviews provide various research angles in their summary of the literature, but have not provided a policy perspective

What is unknown?

- No comprehensive overview of PA media campaigns.
- No policy perspective, while this information is essential to inform and enable policy makers to weigh their choices based on the best available evidence.



What our studies add

Study aims:

1. To summarize the evidence from published reviews on the effectiveness of mass-media campaigns to promote PA or PA-related determinants (intermediate psychological and proximal outcomes).
2. To identify policy-relevant recommendations related to successful PA campaigns.

Mass media campaigns and different levels of outcomes (Brown Framework¹)

- Proximal (e.g. awareness):
 - 11/22 Reviews reported on proximal outcomes.
 - Consistent evidence for impact of mass-media on awareness and recall.
 - Awareness is important to enhance further behaviour change.
 - Suitable to support policy changes and agenda setting.
- Intermediate (e.g. knowledge, intentions, attitudes):
 - 7/22 Reviews reported on intermediate outcomes.
 - Modest but usually positive associations.
 - More frequently investigated in more recent studies.
- Distal (e.g. physical activity behaviour):
 - All reviews reported on distal outcomes.
 - Mixed evidence.

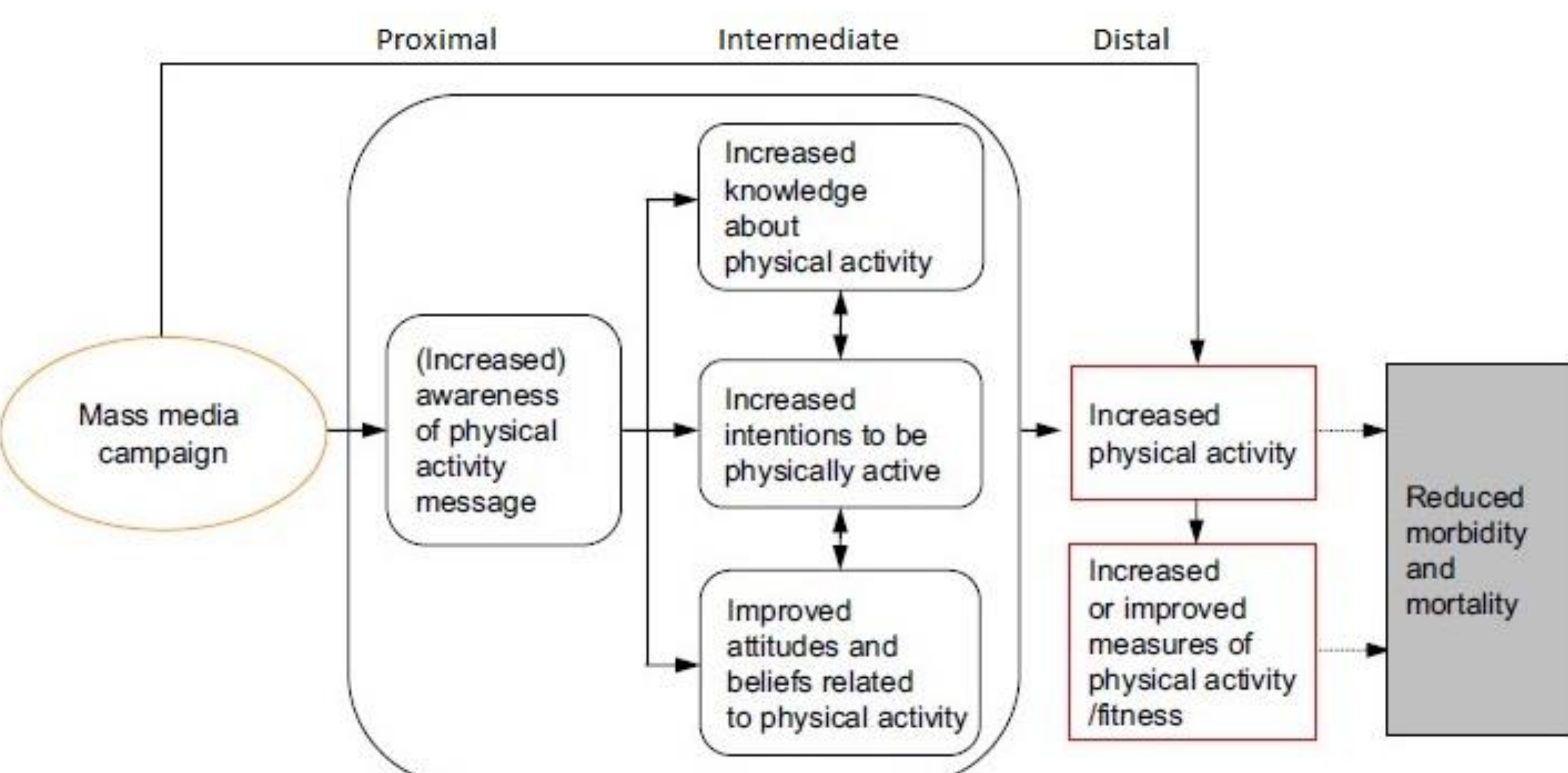


Figure 1. The framework of mass-media campaigns by Brown et al.¹ with proximal, intermediate and distal outcomes for the individual

Policy recommendations

The current evidence acknowledges that there are various levels of impact of mass-media campaigns, and that campaigns can have a pivotal role in changing social norms and awareness. In general, the more distal the outcomes under study, the smaller and more inconsistent the evidence base for effectiveness. As a result, the current evidence for mass-media campaigns indicates that the effectiveness on PA behaviour is limited.

Some policy-relevant characteristics related to successful PA campaigns were identified:

- 1) To achieve behaviour change, mass-media is an important component of larger, multilevel, and multicomponent strategies.
- 2) Mass-media strategies should be coordinated and aligned at local- and national-level, and be sustained, monitored and resourced at these levels.
- 3) Media should be tailored to reduce socioeconomic inequalities.

Literature references

¹ Brown et al., 2012, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2012.07.035>