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Farmers Have Hearts

The effectiveness of a
cardiovascular workplace
health promotion
intervention for Irish farmers.

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Farmers Have Hearts Context

HSE- contracted IHF to the FHH
2013/14 project

- 1000 Cardiovascular Health Checks
- 4 Counties (Cavan, Mayo, Longford & Cork)
- To identify farmers with CVD risk factors
- To provide cardiovascular health information & promote positive behaviour change
- Evaluation



Health inequalities farmers

Mortality rates farmers:
7 x Heart / vascular diseases
5 x Any cause of death
3x Cancer

(Smyth et al., 2012)

Over recent decades, Irish farmers have experienced the lowest reduction in mortality rates of all socio-economic groups

(Layte et al., 2014)



Key factors underpinning health inequalities among farmers

- Lower socio-economic group
- Lower educational attainment
- Rural living conditions
- Social exclusion
- Gender
- 'Hard to reach' group

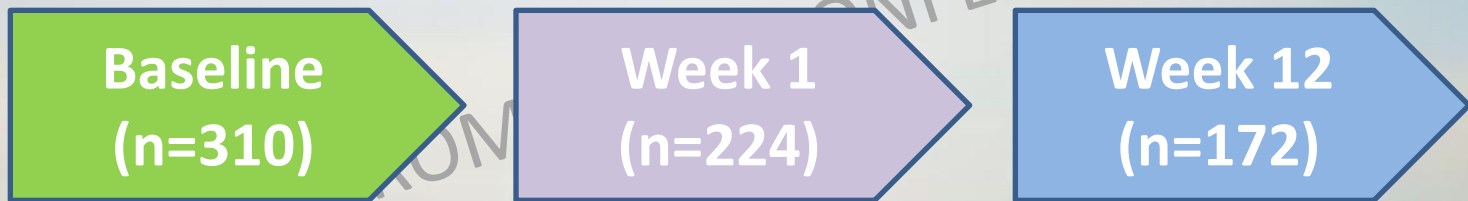


Smyth et al., 2012; CSO, 2012, Welch, 2000,
Cleary et al., 2012; Walsh, 2010;
National Rural Health Alliance, 2011

FHH Evaluation

To investigate the impact of the Farmers Have Hearts (FHH) Programme on Irish farmers specifically in relation to health behaviour change.

Methodology



- Insight into the cardiovascular health status of participating farmers
- Follow-up use of GP services
- Behaviour change (contemplation and action)
- Evidence base on how to engage with farmers in relation to health

Socio demographic background

Age (n=224)	%	Farming enterprise (n=224)	%
<35	6	Dry cattle	42
35-44	19	Cattle rearing	29
45-54	30	Dairy	11
55-64	27	Dairy & cattle	9
≥65	18	Sheep	5
Marital Status (n=223)	%	Other	4
Married / cohabiting	72	Full time or part time farming (n=224)	%
Single	22	Full time	55
Separated / divorced	5	Part time	45
Widowed	1	Education level (n=224)	
Living arrangements (n=224)		Primary only	21
Living alone	15	Some or completed secondary	61
Not living alone	85	Some or completed Third level	18

Cardiovascular health status farmers

Objective Measured health outcomes	%
Blood pressure ($\geq 140/90$ mmHg)	46
Total cholesterol levels ≥ 5.0 mmol/L	46
LDL levels (>3.0 mmol/L)	44
Overweight (BMI kg/m^2 25.0-29.9)	51
Obese (BMI kg/m^2 ≥ 30.0)	36
'At risk' (37-40 inches) waist	42
'High risk' ($>40+$ inches) waist	38

Self-reported health and lifestyle behaviours

Self-reported health and lifestyle	%
Family history	82
Lack of physical activity (<5 days a week)	35
Stress	64
Most of the time	16
Alcohol use	46
>17 standard drinks per week	25
Smoking	18

Risk factors for cardiovascular health

Total Blood pressure \geq 140-159/90/99

Total cholesterol $>$ 5.0 mmol/L

HDL cholesterol $<$ 1.0 mmol/L

LDL cholesterol \geq 3.0 mmol/L

Triglycerides \geq 2.0 mmol/L

Blood glucose levels \geq 7.0 mmol/L

BMI kg/m² \geq 25(Overweight)

High Waist circumference \geq 37 inches

Family history of Heart disease, Stroke or Diabetes

Tobacco use

Regular alcohol use

Standard drinks per week $>$ 17

Physically inactive; less than 5 days a week active

Stress ('often'/'most of the time')



**81% of farmers
four or more risk
factors for CVD**

Follow-up use GP services

Baseline:

- 79% advised to see their GP

Week 1:

- 11% reported having visited their GP
- 45% 'planning' to visit GP

Week 12:

- In total 32% reported having visited their GP as direct result of the cardiovascular health check



Behaviour change

Behaviour change (Self-report)	Week 1 (n=224) Contemplation %	Week 12 (n=172) Action %
Yes	74	48
Types of behaviour change		
Diet	64	89
Physical activity	35	93
Smoking habits	56 (n=27)	36 (n=14)
Alcohol consumption	12 (n=74)	29 (n=38)
Stress management	4 (n=135)	17 (n=66)
Other	13	
Perceived positive impact of health behaviour change on health (n=81)		
Yes		65

Behaviour change

Contemplating change

- Age ≥ 65
- Total cholesterol
- LDL



'Healthy' total cholesterol (≤ 5.0 mmol/l) and/or LDL levels (< 3.0 mmol/l)

Making change

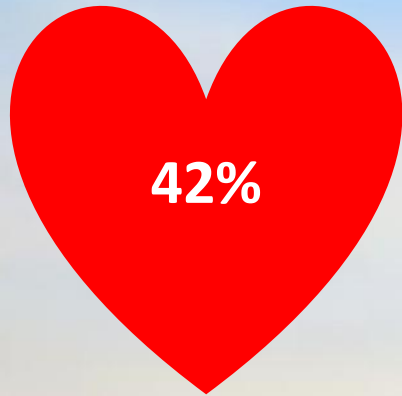
- BMI
- Waist circumference



'Healthy' BMI (≤ 24.9) and/or waist circumference (< 94 cm)

HEALTH PROMOTION CONFERENCE 2016

What works in terms of engaging farmers in health



42%

of farmers would not have attended a health check if it was not for the FHH programme.

- Personal approach IHF staff (18%)
- Opportunistic nature (13%)
- Furthermore: Settings based (workplace), convenient location, time, conditions and peer support

Conclusions FHH Evaluation

- Addressed a health need
- Reach beyond 'worried well'
- Encouraged more proactive health behaviours
- Informed best practice approaches to engaging farmers in relation to health interventions



Recommendations

- Expansion of health promotion targeting Irish farmers
- Follow-up use of (preventive) health services
- Local support networks and peer support
- More research needed specifically in relation to obesity and stress among farmers





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More information:

www.irishheart.ie

Report:

www.irishheart.ie/media/pub/farmershavethearts_evaluation_2014.pdf

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