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Stepping up to Scale: Organisational Implementation of the 10,000 Steps Program in Victoria, Australia

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Purpose

Scalable physical activity programs are essential for addressing population-level inactivity and reducing chronic disease burden. Despite this recognition, few programs have demonstrated sustained implementation. The web- and app-based 10,000 Steps Program is a rare example, successfully implemented across Australia under varying funding models. While the Queensland Government has supported the program for over two decades, Victoria has provided no formal policy support or funding, despite strong organisational and individual uptake. By investigating scale-up in the absence of formal policy and funding, this study offers novel evidence on how organisations mobilise leadership, partnerships, and internal resources to sustain delivery. This study examined how the program has been implemented at scale within diverse settings and organisational contexts across Victoria, identifying enablers and barriers to sustainable delivery.

Methods

A qualitative case study design was employed to examine implementation across 12 Victorian organisations. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews involving 20 participants, including workplace health coordinators, program champions, and senior managers. Interview questions were guided by the WHO ExpandNet “20 Questions for Developing a Scale-Up Strategy,” which provided a structured lens for exploring key domains such as innovation characteristics, user organisation readiness, environmental context, resource team capacity, scale-up strategy, and sustainability. A reflexive thematic analysis approach was used to interpret findings.

Results

Findings revealed that organisations were drawn to the program's evidence base, free use, ease of use, and alignment with workplace health goals. Leadership support (including staff time and an allocated budget) and internal communication were critical for uptake and sustained engagement. Supportive workplace cultures and informal health policies facilitated integration. Flexible, context-specific implementation strategies helped organisations navigate resourcing constraints. Most organisations expressed intent to continue the program, citing positive outcomes and strategic alignment.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates how evidence-based physical activity programs can be implemented at scale within diverse systems, even without formal policy or funding. It further highlights the important role of organisational leadership, strategic partnerships, and contextual adaptation in achieving sustainable implementation. These insights can inform future efforts to embed the 10,000 Steps Program within Victorian health systems and support advocacy for long-term policy alignment and investment.