EDITORIAL

Putting Intervention Mapping on the Map: An Open Educational Special Issue

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Abstract

Intervention development, evaluation, and implementation are central to health psychology, yet much of the accumulated knowledge remains behind closed sources. This special issue makes expertise on Intervention Mapping openly accessible as an educational resource for scholars, citizens, and students. The first part of the issue covers each of the six steps of Intervention Mapping through case studies and practical guidance, complemented by two additional contributions that broaden perspectives on its use and application. Together, the articles provide both foundational insights and reflective lessons, aiming to inspire a wider and more diverse community of Intervention Mapping users.

Key words: Editorial, Special issue, Intervention Mapping

This special issue is dedicated to the memory of Professor Gerjo Kok, who passed away as we were finalising it. Gerjo was a founding father of Intervention Mapping and a mentor, colleague, and inspiration to many of the authors featured here. We are immensely grateful for everything he contributed, to the field and to all of us.

Intervention development, together with evaluation and implementation, has long been a core focus in health psychology, whether concerning behaviour change or other types of interventions used in the field. This has generated a wealth of knowledge, much of which remains behind closed sources. With this special issue we aim to make this knowledge openly available as educational resources for scholars, citizens, and students alike. The issue will appear in two parts, with this first part focusing on Intervention Mapping and a second part covering additional themes. In this way it also continues the tradition of a special issue published ten years ago (Peters, 2014).

Among the many approaches that have shaped intervention development, Intervention Mapping stands out as a framework that has guided researchers and practitioners for more than two decades (Bartholomew et al., 1998). Intervention Mapping is a systematic, iterative approach for developing, implementing, and evaluating health promotion interventions (Bartholomew Eldredge et al., 2016). Rather than a theory, it is a planning framework that integrates evidence, theory, and stakeholder input to guide programme development. Intervention Mapping consists of six cumulative steps and each step will be covered in this special issue! These steps provide a practical blueprint while allowing planners to move back and forth as needed.

Schneider and Volevach kick off the special issue with Step 1 of Intervention Mapping, which lays the foundation for later stages by analysing health needs and assets, and they bring this step to life through a case study. **Said and Peters** continue with Step 2 of Intervention Mapping, offering a practical guide to translating needs assessment findings into concrete objectives for changing health behaviours and environmental conditions. **Metz and colleagues** then present Step 3, which centres on generating programme ideas, selecting behaviour change methods, and translating these into practical applications. They also introduce Acyclic Behaviour Change Diagrams (ABCDs). **Mokhele** provides an overview of Step 4, which focuses on translating a planned programme into a practical and effective real-world intervention. **Bessems and van Assema** draw on the Dutch Good Affordable Food programme to illustrate Step 5, which addresses the adoption and implementation of interventions. **Harms and colleagues** conclude with Step 6, highlighting the complexity of evaluating public health interventions in real-world contexts through three case studies.

To enrich this collection, two further contributions extend beyond the individual steps, offering complementary insights into the use and development of Intervention Mapping. **Crutzen and Nalukwago** describe Core Processes, a systematic way to address questions that lead to evidence-based solutions in problem-driven contexts. **Stutterheim** takes a reflective approach, candidly sharing the mistakes she made when applying Intervention Mapping to reduce HIV-related stigma in Dutch health care, and drawing lessons learned across all six steps as well as overarching insights.

This special issue is packed with learning, insights, and practical guidance on applying Intervention Mapping. We are very grateful to the lead authors, who were invited to contribute, and to all co-authors for sharing their expertise. Many of the leading European experts on Intervention Mapping, including contributors to the Intervention Mapping book, are based in or connected to universities in the south of the Netherlands. This made the invitations a natural starting point. At the same time, we encouraged authors to involve collaborators from beyond these universities and, where possible, from underrepresented groups in academia, to broaden perspectives. By making these resources openly available, we hope to inspire a wider community of scholars and practitioners, paving the way for an even more diverse special issue in the future.

We hope you enjoy reading this special issue and that the resources it offers will be of value to scholars, citizens, and students alike. By sharing these insights openly, we aim to make Intervention Mapping more accessible to everyone with an interest in it. And if future Editors-in-Chief decide to continue this tradition, they now already have something on their to-do list.

References

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