

ImpENSA

Capacity Building to Improve Early Nutrition and Health in South Africa



Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union



The ImpENSA Training Programme includes:

- **Module 1** (e-learning): Optimising micronutrient nutrition during the first 1000 days of life.
- **Module 2** (e-learning): Communication to support behaviour change.
- **Module 3** (virtual): **Healthy Conversation Skills** to support behaviour change

LETTER FROM THE TEAM

Healthy Conversation Skills to support behaviour change - Module 3 of the ImpENSA Training Programme

Estelle Strydom (NWU), Kerry Sexton (UCT) and Wendy Lawrence (UoS)

The first two modules of the ImpENSA Training Programme will provide healthcare professionals with the necessary knowledge to effectively support pregnant women, mothers and family to optimise intake of key micronutrients during the first 1000 days of life. The third module will provide the learner with the necessary skills to bring about behaviour change. Healthy Conversation Skills is an established, evidence-based approach to supporting behaviour change. A 'healthy conversation' is one that supports an individual to explore their own world or context, identify solutions from within, and plan first steps towards changing a health behaviour. This approach comes from an empowerment perspective, recognising that when an individual comes up with their own solution they are more likely to take ownership of it – making it more likely to be maintained over time.

Module 3 consists of two training sessions that are facilitated virtually by Healthy Conversation Skills Coordinators. The sessions are delivered via Zoom and uses different strategies and technologies for the training to be highly interactive and engaging. The delivery of the Training Programme (including Module 3) is currently being piloted (see article on page 2).

preview HOW?

Healthy Conversation Skills: response styles

WHAT?

- Open Discovery Question
- Open Question (other)
- Closed Question
- Empathy / Reflection
- In my experience
- Telling / Suggesting

I would like to eat more healthily

WHAT?

- S** specific: What food would you like to include? What foods do you currently eat? What foods do you see as healthy? What makes you think your diet is unhealthy?
- M** measurable: How many are you eating now? How many portions of fruit would you like to eat every day? How many days of the week would you like to eat fruit?
- A** action-orientated: How confident do you feel that you will reach this e.g. on a scale of 1-5? What fruit are you going to eat first? Where will you buy it? How much are you willing to spend?
- R** realistic: How close is your nearest grocery store? What has stopped you from eating fruit before? How will you overcome that?
- T** timed: How did you get on? When would you like to start? When would you like to have this completed?
- E** evaluated: How will you know if its working? How would you like to follow up/when would be a good time to catch up?
- R** reviewed: How will you feel if you done well/not done well?

RECENT MOVEMENTS - 5th Biannual Meeting

Christine Taljaard-Krugell (ADSA)

The 5th biannual meeting was hosted online by the Medical University of Warsaw on the 19th and 20th of October 2021. All partner institutions were represented by the consortium. While the current circumstances did not allow for international travel, fruitful discussions still continued online. The meeting focused on various aspects of work package 3 (set up and maintenance of e-learning platform and the online modules); work package 4 (delivery of the Training Programme and the pilot thereof) and work package 5 (monitoring of ImpENSA and evaluation of the Training Programme). Furthermore, discussions on work package 6 followed (increasing awareness and exploiting project outputs).

With the end in sight, partners are excited about the ImpENSA launch event to take place in April 2022. All fingers are crossed, that this event will take place on African soil at the beautiful Stellenbosch.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

Train the Coordinator Mentoring Programme

Kerry Sexton (UCT) and Wendy Lawrence (UoS)

Earlier this year, the ImpENSA consortium selected 4 coordinators from SA and 1 from Germany to undergo our HCS Train-the-Coordinator Mentoring Programme, which trained them to become HCS coordinators. This has qualified them to train frontline healthcare professionals online to use these skills as part of their routine contact with patients and clients. Ronel Beukes, a lecturer in the Division of Nutrition at Stellenbosch University and one of these selected coordinators, summed up her experience of the programme by saying, "I am no marathon athlete, but I enjoy being taken out of my comfort zone".

At times, it did seem like an uncomfortable marathon! The journey began with the coordinators completing approximately 15 hours of the first 3 modules online with the initial group of participants. This was followed by several online mentoring and coaching sessions facilitated by Wendy Lawrence. These were originally envisaged as face-to-face sessions, but thanks to COVID lockdowns, had to be reworked as a virtual offering, hosted via Zoom. An extra tech training session was also included on how to use Zoom to maximise engagement and interactivity. After these sessions and hours of preparation, the trained coordinators were keen to start applying and practising their newly acquired skills, by facilitating and cofacilitating in turns a total of four virtual HCS trainings. Then the real learning began. Although the training is very effective via Zoom, challenges abounded in the form of loadshedding and other connectivity and technological difficulties. Despite these, and thanks to creative and quick thinking by the coordinators and further expert support by Wendy, 36 healthcare professionals completed HCS training. Their feedback was testimony to the success of the Mentoring Programme.

This phase of the project was completed at the end of October. The newly trained coordinators are currently delivering virtual HCS to healthcare professionals working in a first 1000 days setting as part of the pilot of the Training Programme.

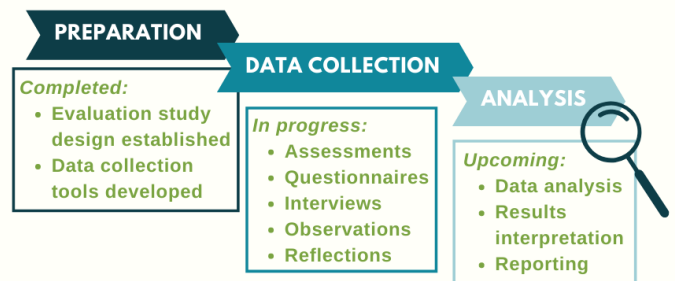
Evaluation studies

Bernadeta Patro-Golab (MUW) and Sunhea Choi (UoS)

It took a team effort of the partners from MUW, UoS, NWU, SUN and NSSA to prepare the evaluation studies. The evaluation team extensively revised the initial study designs to overcome the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The evaluation studies in their final forms are prepared to be conducted entirely online, remotely.

The ImpENSA Train-the-Coordinator Mentoring Programme delivery and its evaluation started in August. Observation of all online facilitated training and mentoring activities were conducted. Pre and post interviews with the mentee SA coordinators, mentee self-reflection and expert observation (by Wendy Lawrence) on their Healthy Conversation Skills training delivery were also carried out for further investigation. Upon completion of the follow-up study, it is planned to investigate whether the mentoring programme succeeded in preparing its mentees to become competent ImpENSA Training Programme Coordinators.

In October the ImpENSA Training Programme pilot began. It aims to investigate the effectiveness of the training programme in: 1) facilitating knowledge and skills development among SA healthcare professionals and 2) enabling them to better support pregnant women and mothers to optimise nutrition through positive behaviour changes. Pre-assessment, questionnaire and interviews were successfully completed by the first group of study participants. Findings from the study will be shared in the coming newsletter.



The interactive activities were engaging

It was very practical and there was enough time to practice the new skills; I even learned new skills on Zoom

THIS IS A MUCH NEEDED MODULE FOR HEALTH PRACTITIONERS

The learning environment felt safe and non-judgemental

I was very happy with the coordinators, they both had great presentation skills and connected with us even though it was virtual

UPCOMING EVENTS

Training Programme Launch

Estelle Strydom (NWU)

The ImpENSA Training Programme will be officially launched on the 7th of April in Stellenbosch. The Training Programme will then be openly available for all interested healthcare practitioners in South Africa. During the rest of the week, consortium partners will also be attending the 6th biannual meeting where results from the evaluation studies will be discussed and further plans for the dissemination and sustainability of the project will be put in place.



- Video interviews with participants who've completed the ImpENSA Training Programme as part of the initial roll-out or pilot will be published on our [YouTube channel](#) soon.

Ensuring a scientific basis and factual correctness of the Training Programme

Shweta Feher (LMU) and Renee Blaauw (SUN)

Module 1 and 2 are e-learning modules containing interactive media elements, case-scenarios and quizzes, designed for self-paced learning. Module 3, which was formerly planned to be delivered face-to-face, is currently being delivered online via interactive Zoom sessions due to the Covid pandemic.

One of our biggest challenges in designing and developing the Module content was ensuring scientific validity and accuracy of the content. We held focus group discussions with potential end-users of the programme (dietitians, nutritionists, pharmacists, medical practitioners, nurses) to determine their needs for module content and outcome. A scoping analysis was also completed to determine the existing training landscape for healthcare professionals in South Africa. Modules 1 and 2 were designed by content experts who conducted extensive literature searches to ensure the most recent evidence-based guidelines were captured. Content validity was further ensured by inviting content specialists to provide comments and input on the theoretical content, visual display, case scenarios and assessment criteria for each module. After necessary adaptations were made, face validity was tested by asking end-users to complete the online modules and to provide feedback.

To ensure reliability of the programme, the five coordinators trained by the super trainer, were engaged in an extensive training programme. Each coordinator delivered Module 3 to a group of 6-8 end-users on four different occasions as practice runs. Thereafter the formal project pilot study started. (See the articles on page 2.) Throughout the training exercise, the coordinators were guided and supported by the super trainer.

The “behind-the-scenes” content and face validity and reliability testing have added a huge time and organisational commitment to the project team. A total of 83 people were recruited and participated in the initial focus group discussions. For the five rounds of face validity and reliability testing, a total of 65 dietitians and nutritionists were recruited and invited to participate in the Train the Coordinator Mentoring Programme. The pilot studies will be conducted with at least 32 participants. This proved to be a massive organisational undertaking as each of them had to be registered on the training platform and received the necessary support while completing the course and providing feedback to the team. They received 15 CPD points upon successful completion of the Training Programme.

By conducting this extensive testing of the project, the ImpENSA team aims to ensure that the content is scientifically correct, relevant and user-friendly before the official launch of the project in 2022. We hope that this will ensure the long-term sustainability of the project.

A warm welcome to



another new ImpENSA team member, Helvi, who joined us on 7 August! Congrats to Jeannine Baumgartner and family, and we love that Helvi is showing off her African roots.

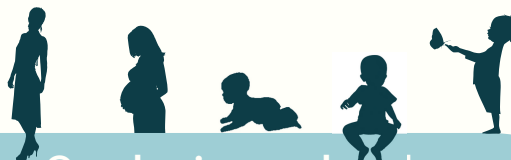
**WHERE YOU
WILL ALSO
SEE US:**

The ImpENSA project has been showcased as project best results and inspiring practices at the [Erasmus+ CBHE Virtual Fair](#)

Watch our symposium presented at the [International Congress of Dietetics 2021](#) on our [YouTube channel](#)

We are contributing to a video series on complementary feeding produced by [ADSA](#), which will be published soon

CONNECT WITH US



Email: info@impensa.co.za / enea@med.uni-muenchen.de

Website: www.early-nutrition.org/impensa

Twitter: [@EarlyNutrition](#) [#ImpENSA](#)

YouTube: [ImpENSA](#)

- Ludwig-Maximilians University of Munich (LMU)
- University of Southampton (UoS)
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- Association for Dietetics South Africa (ADSA)
- North-West University (NWU)
- University of Cape Town (UCT)
- Stellenbosch University (SUN)
- Nutrition Society of South Africa (NSSA)