

The monitoring and evaluation of CycleOn – a system approach

Lisanne Balk, Caroline van Lindert, Kirsten Gutter, Vicky Dellas, Lysanne de Gijt and Kate de Jager

Keywords: CycleOn, cycling, elderly, safety awareness, system approach

Background

In the Netherlands, the number of elderly cyclists involved in accidents has increased over the last years. To reduce accidents with elderly cyclists, and to keep them cycling safe as long as possible, the ministry of Infrastructure has initiated a new, innovative approach, called CycleOn.

After an extensive and successful pilot study, CycleOn has officially started in 2018. CycleOn is different compared to previous programs on cycling safety, as an important aspect is the focus on making elderly cyclists aware of safety concerns, before aiming on behavioral change. In contrast, previous programs on cycling safety have shown to be ineffective as interventions were targeting people who were unaware of the increased risk. CycleOn focuses on awareness, by making cycling safety open to discussion in places elderly already visit and through their own trusted network (a gym class, at the bridge club, visit of a physician, purchase of a bicycle). Here, they are offered information and activities that make them aware of the risks. Subsequently, they are offered information, advice and activities that aim to change their behavior and eventually improve cycling safety. CycleOn is coordinated at a national level, but is implemented locally, in municipalities. The program also provides a digital platform with practical resources, knowledge and support.

Aim

The aim of this study is to evaluate CycleOn, by using a system approach. We focus on the effectiveness of CycleOn by studying changes in awareness and attitude of elderly cyclists. Importantly, to evaluate the program as a whole, we also aim to investigate the reach of the program and the level and quality of the implementation and adoption in local settings.

Method

The evaluation of CycleOn is performed over the course of two years. The reach of the program, the level of implementation and promoting and obstructing factors are investigated by administering questionnaires to people involved in the regional and local implementation. In order to assess the quality of implementation and changes in awareness and attitude of elderly cyclists, individual interviews and focus groups have been performed with participants and local policymakers who are involved in the implementation of the program.

Results

Today all 12 provinces in the Netherlands and over 80 municipalities take part in CycleOn. Despite of covid19 regulations, the majority of municipalities were able to organize multiple activities. The results demonstrate that the program is most effective when elderly cyclist are involved in the development of the activities. Given the diversity of the target population, it is important to take the needs and preferences of the target population into account. In order to reach the elderly cyclists, focus should be on having fun and social interaction, instead of the risk of having accidents. Differences in approaching the program between local policy makers from the sectors traffic safety and care and welfare, poses challenges in communication.

Conclusions

CycleOn is an innovative program in increasing cycling safety in elderly. The implementation is successful and first results demonstrate that this new approach is effective in reaching elderly cyclists and increasing awareness about cycling safety.