

Abstract

Introduction: Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) have become increasingly available in sports clubs, facilitating early access where necessary. However, it is unclear whether members of the public are sufficiently prepared or willing to use an AED.

Objectives: To investigate knowledge and attitudes among sports club members toward AEDs, and to examine the potential benefits of an educational programme as an intervention for increasing awareness and willingness to use an AED.

Methods: A number of selected Cork GAA clubs were visited and participants aged ≥ 16 were asked to complete a questionnaire relating to current awareness and attitudes toward AEDs, and their willingness to use the device. Each participant then attended a 2-hour small-group teaching session where they were educated on the role and use of an AED, with opportunity to practice AED use in a controlled environment. After receiving teaching, each individual again completed the questionnaire.

Results: 142 people participated in the study. Before teaching, the average level of knowledge regarding AED use was relatively low. The most common reason identified for unwillingness to operate an AED was lack of knowledge on how to correctly use the device. Paired data analysis showed that attendance at a 2-hour educational programme led to a significant improvement in layperson awareness and understanding of AED use. After teaching, 77.5% of participants reported that they would definitely be willing to use an AED, compared with 20.4% before teaching.

Conclusion: A structured educational programme can increase layperson awareness, confidence and willingness to operate an AED.