

Université de Montréal

**Elaboration and refinement of a motivational communication training program for  
healthcare professionals in pediatric oncology: a feasibility and acceptability study**

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Essai doctoral présenté en vue de l'obtention du grade de doctorat  
en psychologie – Clinique – D. Psy, option psychologie clinique

Août 2020

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## Résumé

**Introduction :** Un mode de vie sain pourrait avoir un impact positif dans la réduction de l'incidence de certaines séquelles à long terme secondaires aux traitements de cancers pédiatriques. La communication motivationnelle (CM) est efficace pour promouvoir les saines habitudes de vie, en particulier dans les situations où les patients perçoivent le changement comme un défi. À ce jour, il n'existe aucun programme d'intervention disponible utilisant la CM visant à promouvoir les saines habitudes de vie en oncologie pédiatrique. **Objectifs :** L'objectif de cette étude est de développer le premier programme de formation en CM pour les professionnels en oncologie pédiatrique, et d'évaluer sa faisabilité et son acceptabilité. **Méthodologie :** En accord avec les standards impliquant les professionnels, nous avons développé une formation intitulée *Les Cafés de motivation* composée de 6 séances ciblant les compétences de base en CM pour les professionnels de la santé qui souhaitent intervenir positivement sur les modes de vie des familles en oncologie pédiatrique. Nous avons utilisé une combinaison mixte de méthodes quantitatives et qualitatives pour évaluer la faisabilité et l'acceptabilité du programme. Les participants des domaines de la nutrition et de l'activité physique ( $N = 16$ ) ont assisté à deux sessions de la formation et ont rempli des questionnaires sur le contenu et le format du programme, ainsi que sur l'auto-efficacité et les connaissances en CM. Les taux de participation et de rétention ont été utilisés pour évaluer la faisabilité et l'acceptabilité, et des questions ouvertes pour identifier les forces et faiblesses du programme pour l'affiner davantage. Nous avons employé des tests non paramétriques pour comparer les changements pré-post des mesures sur l'auto-efficacité et les connaissances en CM. **Résultats :** La participation et la rétention (c.-à-d., 4,2/6 séances) furent élevées, suggérant une très bonne faisabilité et adhérence à la formation. Nous avons également constaté des niveaux élevés d'acceptabilité et de pertinence du programme (c.-à-d.,  $> 90\%$ ). En ce qui concerne l'auto-efficacité et les mesures de connaissances, les résultats suggèrent des améliorations probables, bien que ceux-ci ne furent pas statistiquement significatifs étant donné la taille limitée de l'échantillon. Les données ont pu être recueillies comme prévu. **Conclusion :** La formation *Les Cafés de motivation* est maintenant prête à être testée comme essai pilote dans les centres de cancérologie.

**Mots-clés :** cancer pédiatrique, saines habitudes de vie, médecine préventive, communication motivationnelle, développement de la formation et psychologie clinique

## Abstract

**Introduction:** A healthy lifestyle could have a positive impact in reducing the incidence of some long-term sequelae secondary to pediatric cancer treatments. Motivational communication (MC) is effective at improving healthy lifestyle habits, especially when patients experience change as a challenge. To date, there is no available intervention program using MC that promotes healthy lifestyles in pediatric oncology. **Objectives:** The aim of this study is to develop the first MC training program for professionals in pediatric oncology and assess its feasibility and acceptability. **Materials and methods:** Following standard procedures involving professionals, we developed a professional-targeted training named the *Motivation Cafés*, consisting in 6 sessions of core MC skills for healthcare professionals who wish to positively impact lifestyles of families in pediatric oncology. We used a mixed-methods quantitative-qualitative study to assess the program feasibility and acceptability. Professionals in nutrition and physical activity ( $N = 16$ ) attended two sessions of the training and completed surveys on the content and format, and self-efficacy and knowledge in MC. Participation and retention rates were used to assess acceptability and feasibility, and open-ended questions to identify strengths and weaknesses of the program to further refine the program. We used non-parametric statistics to compare pre-post changes on measures of self-efficacy and knowledge in MC. **Results:** Attendance and retention (i.e., 4.2/6 sessions) were high, suggesting very good adherence and feasibility. We also found high levels of acceptability and pertinence of the program (i.e., > 90%). Regarding self-efficacy and knowledge measures, the results suggested probable improvements, but these were not statistically significant given the limited sample size. Data points could be collected as planned. **Conclusion:** The training *Motivation Cafés* is now ready to be pilot tested in cancer care centres.

**Keywords:** pediatric cancer, healthy lifestyles, preventive medicine, motivational communication, training development and clinical psychology

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## Liste des abréviations et sigles

c.-à-d. : C'est-à-dire

CHU : Centre hospitalier universitaire

CM : Communication motivationnelle

CMHA : Canadian Mental Health Association

*d* : Cohen's *d*

i.e. : In other words

e.g. : For example

MC : Motivational communication

MCKQ : MC Knowledge Questionnaire

MI : Motivational interviewing

ORBIT : Obesity-Related Behavioral Intervention Trials

SE-12 : Self-Efficacy questionnaire-12

SVQ-MC : Social Validity Questionnaire – MC

UHC : University Health Centre

*“When people are truly interested in why they do something, and personally committed to making a change, blame is irrelevant.”*– Edward L. Deci



## Remerciements

Cet essai représente le point ultime d'un parcours académique de troisième cycle à la fois sinueux et exigeant, mais ô combien passionnant, et qui aura mis le projecteur sur l'obscurité de la psyché humaine. À plus grande échelle, il s'inscrit pour moi dans une transition de vie marquée de gens qui ont su, en aval comme en amont, laisser leurs traces de soutien et d'encouragements, et rendre ce projet réalisable.

D'abord, je tiens à remercier M. Serge Sultan, mon directeur de recherche, pour l'intérêt et la confiance, en l'espace d'un café, qu'il m'a accordée pour mener à bout un tel projet. Vous avez su, Serge, par votre accompagnement, sagesse et notoriété en recherche, y apporter la mouture exacte, de sorte qu'il en découle un programme de formation qui saura germer au-delà des frontières institutionnelles.

Deuxièmement, je tiens à remercier Catherine Laurin, collègue et amie, qui, l'oreille attentive, le regard futé et le sourire humble, m'a accompagné professionnellement à travers cette épopée. Catherine, il fallait que nos chemins se recroisent!

Je tiens à remercier le département de psychologie de l'Université de Montréal, plus particulièrement le corps professoral dans son ensemble et le personnel de la Clinique universitaire de psychologie, pour les savoirs communiqués, le partage de vos expériences cliniques, et la collaboration exemplaire dont vous avez fait preuve.

Un clin d'œil de gratitude à mes amis et collègues du laboratoire de psycho oncologie du CHU Ste-Justine, qui ont su colorer d'humour l'ambiance de ce doctorat et alléger les périodes entaillées d'embûches.

Finalement, je tiens à exprimer ma gratitude envers ma famille proche, plus particulièrement mes parents, pour avoir cru à ce projet au milieu de ma vie, et l'avoir rendu possible, à leur manière, par leur soutien et la valeur indéniable qu'ils accordent à l'éducation. Ce diplôme, c'est aussi le vôtre! Je ne pourrais passer sous silence l'appui soutenu et constructif de mon mari. Anthony, more than ever, your devoted love and admirable support were the anchors of my success.

## **Introduction**

Cet essai doctoral est composé d'un article empirique qui sera soumis à la Revue *Health Psychology and Behavioral Medicine* à l'automne 2020. Une mise en contexte brossera le portrait du rationnel et des objectifs de l'étude. Elle sera suivie de la méthodologie employée, des résultats, et de la discussion qui fera foi de conclusion.

# Article

Elaboration and refinement of a motivational communication training program for healthcare professionals in pediatric oncology: a feasibility and acceptability study

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## Introduction

Medical advances afford survival rates often higher than 80% in pediatric cancer, with certain highly prevalent malignancies, such as leukemia, reaching a 90% cure rate in developed countries such as Canada and the United States (Hunger et al., 2012; Iyer et al., 2015). However, these medical improvements take their toll in adulthood for most cured children who have undergone chemotherapy and radiotherapy, resulting in significant late effects such as cardiometabolic sequelae (Meacham et al., 2010; Bhakta et al., 2017).

Most common pediatric cancers and its treatments are associated with increased frequency of cardiometabolic outcomes, obesity, and a deterioration in physical fitness in almost 75% of survivors (Levy et al., 2017). These debilitating and life-threatening conditions can occur decades after treatment (Levy et al., 2017; Hudson et al., 2013) and influence the quality of life of survivors (Brinkman et al., 2016).

Risk minimization in this very vulnerable population implies attending to all risk factors of cardiometabolic conditions such as a sedentary lifestyle and diet. Studies have suggested the beneficial impact of nutrition and physical activity in the context of adult cancer (Demark-Wahnefried & Jones, 2008). Research also suggests that physical activity can potentially benefit younger patients (i.e., pediatric and young adults) undergoing chemotherapy (Huang & Ness, 2011). The musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, and immune systems can be strengthened, resulting in the short- and long-term prevention or mitigation of treatment side effects (e.g., inflammation, chronic fatigue) (Soares-Miranda et al., 2013; Wolin, Ruiz, Tuchman & Lucia, 2010). However, studies also show that pediatric and adult cancer survivors tend to be less physically active than the general population (Demark-Wahnefried & Jones, 2008).

In childhood cancer survivors, a better adherence to healthy dietary patterns, such as the Mediterranean diet, improves metabolic and anthropometric status (e.g., visceral and subcutaneous adiposity, waist circumference) (Tonorezos, 2013). Unfortunately, survivors often do not follow dietary recommendations with 46-88% nonadherence to the Mediterranean diet and 51% of energy intake from highly processed food (Bérard et al., 2020; Robien et al., 2008). Furthermore, treatments often induce a change in taste in patients, leading them to eat more fatty and salty meals, modify their appetite and alter their eating behaviors, as reported by their primary caregiver (Skolin et al., 2006). A healthy lifestyle in this context refer to a Mediterranean diet, exercising at least

3x/week as recommended by the Canadian health authorities, and avoiding harmful behaviors such as smoking. But these often remain difficult targets for individuals and families to achieve (Robien et al., 2008).

By encouraging cancer patients and their families to adopt a healthier lifestyle, it would be possible, from a preventive medicine perspective, to reduce the incidence of some long-term sequelae secondary to cancer treatments (Magill et al., 2014; Amireault, Fong & Sabiston, 2018). As cardiometabolic processes are cumulative, change for a healthier lifestyle should occur as soon as possible during treatment or in aftercare (Hudson et al., 2013). To do so, both researchers and practitioners have suggested promoting motivation using specific communication techniques. Motivational interviewing (MI) is a directive and collaborative conversational style that helps to strengthen a person's motivation and commitment to change by exploring and resolving its ambivalence (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Motivational communication (MC) is a flexible, hybrid version of MI anchored in cognitive-behavioral therapy and the self-determination theory of change (Rouleau et al., 2015; Deci & Ryan, 2002, 2012). The MC approach combines a series of strategies exploring ambivalence and motivation to change in patients who are trying to adopt a sustainable healthy lifestyle via behavioral modifications (Rouleau et al., 2015). The aim is to support patients in identifying what motivates them, intrinsically, and to help them modify risky lifestyle behaviors by addressing their ambivalence towards change (Deci & Ryan, 2002, 2012). MC incorporates aspects that are not recognized as components of MI (e.g. decisional balance). The approach of MC is also strongly embedded in the three psychological needs that are the pillars of SDT: the needs for competence, social relationships, and autonomy. In MC, change is highly facilitated when the individual feels able to act in a specific environment (competence), when she/he feels connected with the interventionist (social relationships), and when he/she feels being at the origin of her/his behavior (Dragomir et al., 2020; Deci & Ryan, 2012). MC is designed to emphasize the autonomy of the patient by favoring a respectful and constructive relationship with the professional (Laurin and Lavoie, 2011). Importantly, MC also makes use of inputs from the Transtheoretical Model of Change that was developed in parallel with MI to operationalize individual status and guide target and tool selection (Freeman & Dolan, 2001; Miller & Rollnick, 2009). A good example is the staging of change: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, and relapse.

To date, MI has been the subject of more than 200 randomized trials and 1,000 publications across a range of disciplines and clinical settings (CMHA, 2017), and it is associated with favorable

outcomes (Heather et al., 1996; Heckman et al., 2010; Jensen et al., 2011). In pediatric populations, the use of MI has helped improve dietary adherence to diabetic treatment and obesity and has decreased high-risk sexual behaviors (Berg-Smith et al., 1999; Knight et al., 2003; Channon et al., 2007). Motivational techniques have also been associated with improvements in substance abuse, diet, and physical activity (Lundahl et al., 2013). However, compared to interventions with adults, there are fewer applications of motivational techniques in pediatrics. Specifically, family interventions are still scarce due to various factors such as the developmental context of the family (e.g., parents adjusting their parenting style to match the child's needs for independence), the systemic presentation of distress (e.g., high levels of conflict in the family, opposing views between child and parent), and the responses of families to life cycle stages (Naar-Kim & Suarez, 2011; Nock & Ferriter, 2005; Nock & Kazdin, 2005).

In cancer care, applications of motivational strategies have exclusively focused on adult populations. They have targeted physical activity, weight loss, and diet (Demark-Wahnefried & Jones, 2008; Spencer et al., 2016). In this context, studies have shown results that align with other areas of study suggesting that motivational techniques are particularly effective at improving healthy lifestyles when compared to no counseling at all, to phone calls with no MI content, to print material only, or to verbal advice (Spencer et al., 2016).

Training programs designed for professionals do exist (Barwick, Bennett, Johnson, McGowan, & Moore, 2012; Rouleau et al., 2015). Professionals may also receive credits in MC/MI as part of their university curriculum. Evaluation studies of these programs systematically support training effects for all MI skills, despite variations in training structure, outcome measures, and the quality of studies (Barwick, Bennett, Johnson, McGowan, & Moore, 2012). The research evaluating training programs for professionals applying motivational strategies to pediatric populations have focused on adolescent health, particularly substance abuse (Eenshuistra, Harder, & Knorth, 2020; Seigart, Veltman, Willhaus, Letterle, 2018; Vallabhan et al., 2017; Mitcheson, Bhavsar, & McCambridge, 2009).

To date, there is no available training program in MC explicitly for health professionals working in pediatric oncology settings (i.e. with expertise in lifestyle/behavioral change). The specificity of the clinical context, the vulnerability of the population, and the need to positively influence the family as a unit, are aspects that warrant novel developments (Bass, 2018). New

training programs are timely, aiming at promoting healthy lifestyles in pediatric oncology to develop new skills in clinical and research settings.

This project investigated the feasibility of developing and implementing the first MC training program for professionals working in pediatric oncology. Drawing from current behavioral program and development models, first a training program in MC was devised and refined. Second, the feasibility of implementing the training in a hospital's pediatric oncology department was evaluated based on its acceptability (e.g., attendance, retention, pertinence) and its strengths and weaknesses identified by the participants. In addition to feasibility, we tried to measure the potential impact on participants' self-efficacy (i.e., confidence and intention) and knowledge of MC, criteria that previous studies have proven to be both valid and reliable measures for success (Rouleau et al., 2015).

## **Method**

### **Development of the training program**

We first regrouped a team of MC specialists from the CanChange<sup>1</sup> network as well as researchers and clinicians in pediatric hematology-oncology from our healthcare center (i.e., Sainte-Justine UHC) in Montreal.<sup>2</sup> To develop the first version of the program, we favored an active involvement of end-users (i.e., professionals, clinicians, healthcare providers) via regular participation of and consultation with the executive research team, in order to ensure their training needs were being met. To guide the development of the training, we followed steps suggested in the Obesity-Related Behavioral Intervention Trials (ORBIT) to define the intervention (Czajkowski et al., 2015). The initial phase consists of determining the elements and format of the program for adaptation to the context and further clinical relevance. Accordingly, after a thorough literature review on previous experiences of MC in pediatrics, we met with three clinicians and team leaders in nutrition and exercise counseling from our center to identify their most frequent challenges and needs when addressing lifestyle change in this context. One-on-one interviews were conducted in the Fall of 2017 with them to identify expected issues or barriers encountered during interventions with children and adolescents with cancer and their families. We explored

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<sup>1</sup> CanChange fellows: Catherine Laurin, Serge Sultan.

<sup>2</sup> Sainte-Justine UHC researchers and clinicians: Daniel Sinnett, Caroline Laverdière, Valérie Marcil, Daniel Curnier.

organizational preferences regarding participation in training sessions on MC. This was done to assist in the creation of tools and to make decisions regarding the core topics to include in the training (e.g., pediatric oncology cases, role-playing showing patients' resistance and ambivalence, supervision on existing cases). Following this phase, we chose the core topics to be included in the training (i.e., the key methods and complex skills of MC) and the format of the training (i.e., a series of short sessions focusing on active learning and practice). The research team agreed on a logic model, presenting the interconnections between the target population, program components, intervention procedures, outcomes (short-, medium-, and long-term) and behavioural targets (Figure 1). Following educational standards and to ensure reproducibility, we created a training manual for practitioners, with instructions and procedures for future program facilitators.

The training is called *Motivation Cafés* and consists of six core MC skills training sessions for healthcare professionals and providers who wish to positively impact lifestyles of families in pediatric oncology (Table 1). The focus was set on diet and physical activity counseling as these are the most prominent themes in pediatrics. *Motivation Cafés* cover key-factors of motivation and commitment, stages of change, active listening, questioning, ambivalence, and an integration of acquired knowledge and competencies (Freeman & Dolan, 2001; Miller & Rollnick, 2013). The context and cases are specific to clinical aspects and challenges encountered in pediatric oncology. For example, the case of Justin, a fictitious 10-year-old boy described in Session 2, demonstrates three different stages of behavior change in terms of physical activity, when he is experiencing fatigue as a result of chemotherapy treatments. Each session is organized to follow a given set of activities: the theoretical content of MC, an intervention tool related to the theory presented, role-playing based on ad hoc case studies, and some supervision time offered by the instructors to provide feedback targeting issues encountered by professionals. To ensure that all instructions and communications are consistent with MC principles, the sessions were supervised by a consultant in MC, with full training and certification in MC (i.e., CanChange fellow<sup>3</sup>). Her primary role was to support and enrich the training program and help supervise the participants. Participants were given access to the manual within and between sessions.

The *Motivation Cafés* training manual describes in detail the theory and intervention tools, with examples of transcripts. In addition, the transcripts of each role-play are provided. At the

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<sup>3</sup> CanChange fellow: Catherine Laurin.



bottom of each transcript, we included additional questions for participants designed to self-reflect about their own clinical skills and knowledge integration. We also included an infographic summarizing the key intervention tools of MC (e.g., a scale of motivation or confidence to work on patient ambivalence) to be used with patients depending on their readiness for change stage (e.g., contemplation) (Freeman & Dolan, 2001; Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Copies of the manual and the infographic are available in English and in French as online supplementary material to this article.

### **Refinement of the training *Motivation Cafés***

Refining the training design consists of detailing its components, delineating its intensity, frequency, and duration, and preparing the program for preliminary testing (Czajkowski et al., 2015). This process aims to improve the program's strength and efficiency (i.e., best potential clinical effect on the target population with the minimum waste of resources) while ensuring that it will not harm the target population. This part focuses on the feasibility and acceptability of the program. The whole research process was approved by the local research ethics committee (ethics approval number 2017-1413), and all participants provided written consent.

### **Participants**

We recruited a convenience sample of healthcare professionals in our center via email, during short presentations at team meetings, and via team leaders. To be included in this study, healthcare providers had to be involved in an ongoing multimodal intervention program focusing on nutrition and physical activity counseling with families who had a child being treated for cancer at our cancer care centre (CHU Sainte-Justine, 2019). Participants also had to have direct contact with patients and families. The training intended to target professionals in nutrition and physical activity, as we used examples and cases formulations from those fields. As this part focused on refinement, we did not specify any exclusion criteria, such as previous training in MC or other related techniques.

### **Procedures**

A sequential mixed-method design was used to evaluate the feasibility and acceptability of the training. We used self-reported questionnaires that had both open-ended questions and forced-choice questions using Likert scales. The first round of the training sessions was conducted in May

and June 2018 following a schedule that met participants' needs. The next step was to assess and refine the training by taking into consideration survey results. A second refined version of the training was then field tested in a second round with another group of participants during Fall 2018.

## **Measures**

### ***Demographics***

We collected sociodemographic information for participants: age, sex, occupation, years of experience, education, and previous participation in MC training or related techniques.

### ***Social validity***

We used the Social Validity Questionnaire (SVQ) from Ogez et al. (2019). This is a French-language version of questions developed by Kazdin (2005) and Manne et al. (2016) to fit the clinical context of pediatric oncology. This questionnaire was completed at the end of each session. It includes 2 items measuring the pertinence (i.e., items 1 and 3) and 3 items on acceptability (i.e., items 2, 4 and 5) of the training program: 1) "I find the training useful to help me in my interventions"; 2) "I recommend the training to another professional"; 3) "I find the training important/relevant for the patients I follow"; 4) "I learned something new from this training"; 5) "I find that the training has met its objectives". The questionnaire also includes two open-ended questions requesting participants to report their evaluation of the structure and content of each session (e.g., "what are the strengths of the training"; "what are the points that need to be improved"). When appropriate, participants provided their responses on a self-report measure with seven forced choice questions about whether they agreed with statements about pertinence and acceptability (1 = *totally disagree* to 7 = *totally agree*). Items were summed into two scores: Pertinence (inter-item  $r = 0.62$ ) and Acceptability (inter-item  $r = 0.38$ ).

### ***Self-efficacy***

We developed a 10-item questionnaire selecting 8 items from the Self-Efficacy questionnaire-12 (SE-12; Axboe, Christensen, Kofoed & Ammentorp, 2016, items #1, 2, 4, 8-12) and two self-created items to specifically address confidence and motivation. The tool was named SE-10 and closely tapped aspects being trained in the *Motivation Cafés*. The instrument assesses the participant's self-described competence, confidence, and motivation to use MC in his or her everyday practice. It was administered at the start of each individual session. The confidence and

motivation scores range from 1 to 10 (i.e., single item scores). Participants provided their responses about whether they felt confident and/or motivated using MC (1 = *not at all confident* or *not at all motivated* to 10 = *totally confident* or *totally motivated*): e.g., “In the past two weeks, how confident were you applying MC strategies to your patients”. The perceived competence or capability to use MC is composed of eight items with a total range of 8-80. Sample items include: “In the past two weeks, how certain are you that you have been able to: ... successfully check patient’s understanding of the information given, ... successfully make a plan based on shared decisions between you and the patient”, etc. Participants responded about whether they were certain concerning their competence to use MC (1 = *very uncertain* to 10 = *totally certain*) (inter-item  $r = 0.35$ ). The questionnaire also includes open-ended questions to collect the experience of participants on successful/unsuccessful communication skills since the last session.

### ***Knowledge***

We used the MC Knowledge Questionnaire (MCKQ) adapted by Dr. Kim Lavoie and based on original work by Barwick et al. (2012) (K. Lavoie, personal communication, April 20, 2018). Participants provided their responses on a self-report measure with 14 multiple-choice items, with total scores varying from 0 to 14, and reported as percentages, reflecting participants’ knowledge of MC. For each item, the respondent had to choose between two to six possible answers, when appropriate. A sample item is: “True or false? Ambivalence is especially present in the stages of contemplation and preparation”. The instrument was assigned only to the Fall participants of the second round of the program following participants’ suggestion from the first round. The instrument was administered twice, before the training (i.e., pre) and at the end of the 6-session program (i.e., post) and at 3 and 6 months. No consistency coefficient is available for this count score (Streiner, 2003).

### ***Analysis***

We documented feasibility with participation and retention rates. We described quantitative scores of acceptability, pertinence, self-efficacy and knowledge, and used non-parametric Wilcoxon signed rank sum (Wilcoxon) and Friedman one-way repeated measure analysis of variance by ranks (Friedman) tests to compare changes across time. The Cohen’s  $d$  was used to calculate effect sizes and we calculated frequencies when appropriate. To compare change across Summer/Fall training sessions, we used the Mann-Whitney U test. To further explore if changes in

these outcomes would be associated with attendance, we correlated percent changes in self-efficacy and knowledge with number of sessions attended. Quantitative data were managed in IBM SPSS v24. Using the principles of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012), we also identified and described themes from the written content collected in response to open-ended questions. The qualitative data were treated and coded in a Microsoft Excel 2010 spreadsheet. Emergent descriptive themes were identified and associated with corresponding quotes by reading the comments and producing a list of key elements for each theme. This list of key themes was progressively used as a reference throughout the verification process. As textual answers to open-ended questions were short and simple, a systematic intercoder assessment was not necessary, and a structured summary of participants feedback was created. Qualitative themes were triangulated with observation notes from the sessions and the general appreciation of the participants.

## **Results**

We invited 23 professionals, 19 agreed to participate, but only 16 took part to the sessions (participation = 70%) and were subsequently evaluated. The participants were all active in pediatric oncology: 9 (56%) were specialists in physical activity, 4 (25%) were nutritionists, 1 (6%) was a child psychologist, 1 (6%) was a nurse and 1 (6%) was a researcher. The latter two were involved in the coordination of clinical and research activities in pediatric oncology. The participants were, on average,  $28 \pm 6$  years old and primarily women ( $n = 15$ , 93%). Eight (50%) professionals mentioned having attended MC training in the past either formally (e.g., at a university or in a hospital), or informally (i.e., readings or tutorials). Five participated in both the Summer and Fall training sessions, and attendance for the Summer and Fall sessions was  $N = 14$  and  $N = 7$ , respectively.

### **Feasibility and acceptability of the training**

#### **Participation**

On average, participants attended  $4.2 (\pm 2.7)$  training sessions with 9 (56%) attending more than three, and 6 (37%) attending more than four sessions. Four (25%) attended all six sessions. Five participants from the first round felt it was necessary to continue their training and participated in the second round.

### Acceptability and pertinence

Participants ended each encounter by completing the SVQ-MC questionnaire. Overall, they considered the encounters as highly acceptable ( $M = 93.2\%$ ) and pertinent ( $M = 93\%$ ). These results were similar across both training rounds with Summer/Fall mean acceptability rates of 93.2% and 93.2%, respectively, and Summer/Fall mean pertinence rates of 92.8% and 93.1%, respectively. When examining results by session, we found median scores of acceptability for individual sessions to be: S1: 90.5%, S2: 90.5%, S3: 100%, S4: 100%, S5: 100%, S6: 100%, and; pertinence to be: S1: 100%, S2: 96.5%, S3: 100%, S4: 100%, S5: 92.9%, S6: 100%, showing high homogeneity and high scores across sessions.

*Strengths of the intervention.* These high scores were also reflected responses to open-ended questions. Participants appreciated the content they found clear and relevant as they perceived it offered structured intervention tools tailored to their needs (e.g., P19: “Examples that allow me to approach patients differently”). In fact, they reported that skills and communication tools were used between training sessions and reported them as beneficial when interacting with patients and families. In addition, belonging to a stable group throughout the six-session training favored sharing among participants. Participants shared their clinical experiences and how they solved issues, which helped others conceptualize and plan their own interventions. They reported that one of the highlights of the training was the use of role-playing based on scenarios specific to the pediatric hematology-oncology setting. For example, P1 reported: “Practicing scenarios and reflecting on them allowed me to be more comfortable with the tools.” Finally, participants were particularly satisfied with the time allotted in each session to apply theoretical principles into practice. They felt this practical part provided a safe space to practice the intervention tools. For example, P1 reported: “I appreciated the practical aspect, because the theory seems easy to do, but it is difficult to apply” and, P15 reported: “I loved the practice with the musical chair exercise... An excellent way to integrate everything.”

*Issues raised.* First, as scenarios were specific, they questioned generalizability to other practice situations. For example, P8 reported: “The situations are slightly easy, so you may consider building various story options in which things do not develop as expected.” This also points to the necessity of more complex cases, with acute presentations. Second, participants found that time management was an issue. Some found the sessions were scheduled too late after their work shift

and that trainers did not respect the schedule, some sessions lasting longer than planned (sessions were planned to last one hour). Finally, participants also felt that they needed more concise material, such as a formal document synthesizing the theory and tools. For example, P10 reported: “It would be great to have the tools summarized and provided in paper format, so that we could take notes”.

*Adjustments made to intervention.* From these remarks made following the Summer round, we refined the training for the Fall. First, although it was judged already excellent, we further improved transferability to practice by reinforcing the family intervention content. Although research regarding motivational approaches in family interventions is still at an early stage, we revamped the last session, initially serving as a recap session, to include family intervention tools. Second, we made sure to adhere to the schedule and set an appropriate training moment in the day (i.e., at lunch time instead of after their work shift). Third, to better support the participants, we prepared a one-page infographic summarizing the theoretical model underpinning MC and the communication tools addressed in the training (i.e., supplementary material).

### **Changes in self-efficacy**

Here, we explored changes in self-reported competence, confidence and motivation to use MC in the future. Scores from the SE-10 were converted in percentage for participants attending two or more sessions ( $n = 15$ ). When examining differences between the scores of the first and last attended session, we observed that scores increased, on average, by 20% in competence, 11% in confidence, and 7% in motivation. Yet, none of these differences reached statistical significance (Wilcoxon  $p > 0.078$ ). Changes were consistent across Summer and Fall sessions (Mann-Whitney  $p > 0.464$ ). When examining correlations between self-efficacy changes and the number of sessions attended, we observed no association ( $r < .10$ ,  $p > .731$ ). Effect sizes for the Summer sessions were  $d = .70$  (medium, Cohen, 2016) for perceived competence,  $d = .74$  (medium) for the confidence to use MC, and  $d = .23$  (small) for the motivation to use MC. We found small effect sizes for the Fall sessions, with  $d = .14$ ,  $d = .23$ , and  $d = -0.14$ , respectively).

In response to open-ended questions, participants reported having used MC communication tools between training sessions, such as: questioning patients on advantages and disadvantages of change; establishing a treatment plan in collaboration with the patient; reflecting the feeling and/or the ambivalence; identifying and questioning barriers to change, and; actively listening to the needs

of patients. They assessed some interventions as particularly beneficial when interacting with patients and families. For example, P4 responded: “ I explore and rephrase with the patient the advantages of change, making the patient feel capable”; P8 responded: “ I was able to establish a relationship of trust, normalize the patient’s difficulties, and reflect on the patient’s values”; P14 responded: “ I asked permission to make some suggestions to the patient, and I was able to establish reachable objectives”, and; P16 responded: “ I restated the patient’s mentioned difficulties, and asked open-ended questions without directing the conversation”.

On the other side, participants reported difficulties while using some MC tools and techniques learned during the training, especially when they were intervening with adolescents or their parents. For example, P4 reported: “ It was more difficult using MC with teens, and showing empathy when they were going with their families through more difficult times”; P15 reported: “ MI is more challenging with teenagers”, and; P8 reported: “It was challenging reinforcing change-talk, establishing clear goals, and questioning parents about what they learned from the session”. Other difficulties experienced by participants were based on using the MC communication style. For example, P21 responded: “it’s hard not to provide information as we used to do”, and P19 responded: “I had trouble summarizing and focusing on the goals”.

### **Changes in knowledge**

Scores on the MCKQ of the Fall participants tended to increase post-training with baseline/post-training/3-month/6-month follow-ups with *Ms (SDs)* values of 78±15.7%, 84±7.8%, 91±3.1%, and 90±3.8%. Yet, this increase did not reach statistical significance (Friedman  $p > .221$ ). We observed no significant association when examining correlations between knowledge changes and the number of sessions attended ( $r < .89, p > .109$ ).

## **Discussion**

In line with recommendations on program development (Czajkowski et al., 2015), we defined and refined the design of the training *Motivation Cafés*, a manualized training program aimed to enhance MC competencies in healthcare professionals working in pediatric oncology. Following responses to questionnaires, supervision sessions, feedback group sessions and data collection, we assessed the acceptability and feasibility of the program, identifying strengths and limitations, and collated future suggestions for modifications of the training sessions. Until now no

training has been available in MC for professionals managing with the clinical particularities of children, adolescents, and families in pediatric oncology. Few studies estimating the effect of a training in MI or MC in clinicians working with children and adolescents exist (Barwick, Bennett, Johnson, McGowan, & Moore, 2012). We found a randomized trial evaluating the outcome of an MI training for practitioners working in adolescent substance abuse (Mitcheson, Bhavsar, & McCambridge, 2009). Other studies assess the implementation of MI training programs in nursing students, and the training of healthcare providers and counsellors in the use of MI for youth behavior change (Eenshuistra, Harder, & Knorth, 2020; Seigart, Veltman, Willhaus, & Letterle, 2018; Vallabhan et al., 2017). However, high program heterogeneity and dissimilar contexts limited their comparison and interpretation of results (Dragomir, Julien, Bacon, Boucher, Lavoie & CAN-Change, 2019).

### **Acceptability and program relevance**

The results highlight the acceptability and relevance of the program. First, participation was consistent through both training rounds and one third decided to follow the second round to repeat the training to consolidate their newly acquired skills.

Second, the structure of the training program and its components aim to improve MC competency in healthcare professionals working in pediatric oncology through a novel series of sessions combining theoretical presentations, practical exercises, intervention tools applied to typical cases in the field, and supervision for complex situations. Participants at both the Summer and Fall rounds scored high on acceptability and relevance questionnaires. This is noteworthy considering that professionals from the Fall sessions also participated in the Summer sessions, suggesting that the program did not lose its relevance or acceptability over time. Participants emphasised the relevance of presenting and demonstrating structured intervention tools tailored to their patients' issues. The benefit of having supervision time that afforded interactions between healthcare professionals in the sharing of their experiences was also considered relevant by the participants. Participants highlighted some limitations, the major one being time management, and the fact that the training program initially did not reflect on family interventions. To address those limitations, we proceeded with modifications to improve the second round of the training, following recommendations on program refinement (Czajkowski et al., 2015).



When reviewing the literature on MC, we only found one study addressing program satisfaction. Like with *Motivation Cafés*, Seigart, Veltman, Willhaus, and Letterle (2018) demonstrated that nursing students who attended their MI training were very satisfied with the content and simulation experiences. However, they did not find differences in terms of adolescents' attitudes toward substance use. Given the high satisfaction response in their study, the authors underscored the importance of the implementation of MI in healthcare and the necessity to continue the evaluation of existing training programs (Seigart, Veltman, Willhaus, & Letterle, 2018).

### **Competencies in MC, confidence, and motivation to use MC**

Our results suggest that change was likely with regards to competence, confidence and motivation to use MC. Although results were not statistically significant, small to medium effect sizes on competence, confidence, and motivation to use MC suggest changes could be detected if more participants were included. Smaller changes in the Fall round may also be because five participants already were trained in the Summer sessions (i.e., ceiling effect). In fact, when looking at their competence/motivation/confidence values, we observed that participants had higher levels than the rest of the group before training.

Similarly, evaluation of programs designed for professionals working with children or adolescents have not demonstrated statistically significant improvement in outcomes such as competencies. In a randomized trial, Mitcheson, Bhavsar, and McCambridge (2009) used the MI Treatment Integrity Version 2 (MITI Version 2) to assess practitioner competency in simulated sessions with trained actors and showed no impact upon skill levels. The authors only highlighted an effect on the MI spirit (i.e., embracing MI style and way of being). On the other hand, Eenshuistra, Harder, and Knorth (2020) revealed that counsellors intervening in residential youth care adhered significantly more to MI behaviors after the training they received. The authors observed that they used fewer behaviors not adhering to MI after training. Some MI competency requirements were however not met such as the ratio of reflections made to questions asked (Eenshuistra, Harder, & Knorth, 2020).

### **Knowledge in MC**

For those who were assessed on knowledge, we observed high results in knowledge on MC before starting training. Most participants, as nutritionists and physical activity professionals, had

previously received a past MI training. Although not statistically significant due to a very small sample, changes from 78%, to 90% (i.e., change of +15%) in scores on the MCKQ are suggestive of improvements associated with training.

## **Limitations**

We must recognize the limitations of this study, the first being the sample size. Although we aimed to recruit a variety of professionals, the final numbers for the Fall sessions remained limited and results are not generalizable. Given their central role in patients' care, other professionals (such as nurses, physicians) could also be trained in the future. The content of the training *Motivation Cafés* is probably adapted for them, but this should be confirmed considering low inter-item reliabilities of pertinence and acceptability measures applied. Second, although results speak in favor of feasibility and acceptability of the training, the uncontrolled design does not allow for determining the impact of the program on potential outcomes measures. It is also important to note that only a minority of participants followed all six sessions, which may question intervention fidelity. Encouraging consistent participation could call on allowing CE credits to enhance participants' engagement. Our team is now developing an online version of the *Motivation Cafés* to cope with the current pandemic, and this too could increase participation. Participants had a high knowledge of MC pre-training, which draws attention to a possible selection bias, the sample holding positive views toward MC. Future research should explore whether the *Motivation Cafés* yields positive changes using an appropriate study design and the assessment of communication skills in participants. When studying family-level outcomes, it would of course be of major interest to collect the perception of end-users on the program. Finally, other components of a healthy lifestyle could be targeted such as smoking, drinking, and sleeping habits.

In conclusion, we developed a new training for pediatric oncology settings designed to help clinicians communicate better when trying to change health behaviors. The *Motivation Cafés* appears acceptable and feasible. It is a promising training program to be studied in future research. Although not conclusive, pre-post changes in motivation, self-efficacy, and knowledge, suggest that these are favorably enhanced following training. Future studies should pilot-test the present training and assess gains in competency using objective behavioral measures and control groups. Provided that these future steps are followed and successful, the *Motivation Cafés* could help

improve patients' health behaviours in the domains of physical activity and nutrition, which is paramount in the pediatric oncology population.

## **Acknowledgements**

We thank all practitioners in pediatric oncology that participated in the present study at Sainte-Justine UHC, and with specific mention to Émélie Rondeau and Ariane Lacoste-Julien for their helpful comments and organizational support.

## **Funding**

This research was supported was supported by the Charles-Bruneau Cancer Care Centre Foundation and IGA.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The authors report no conflict of interest.

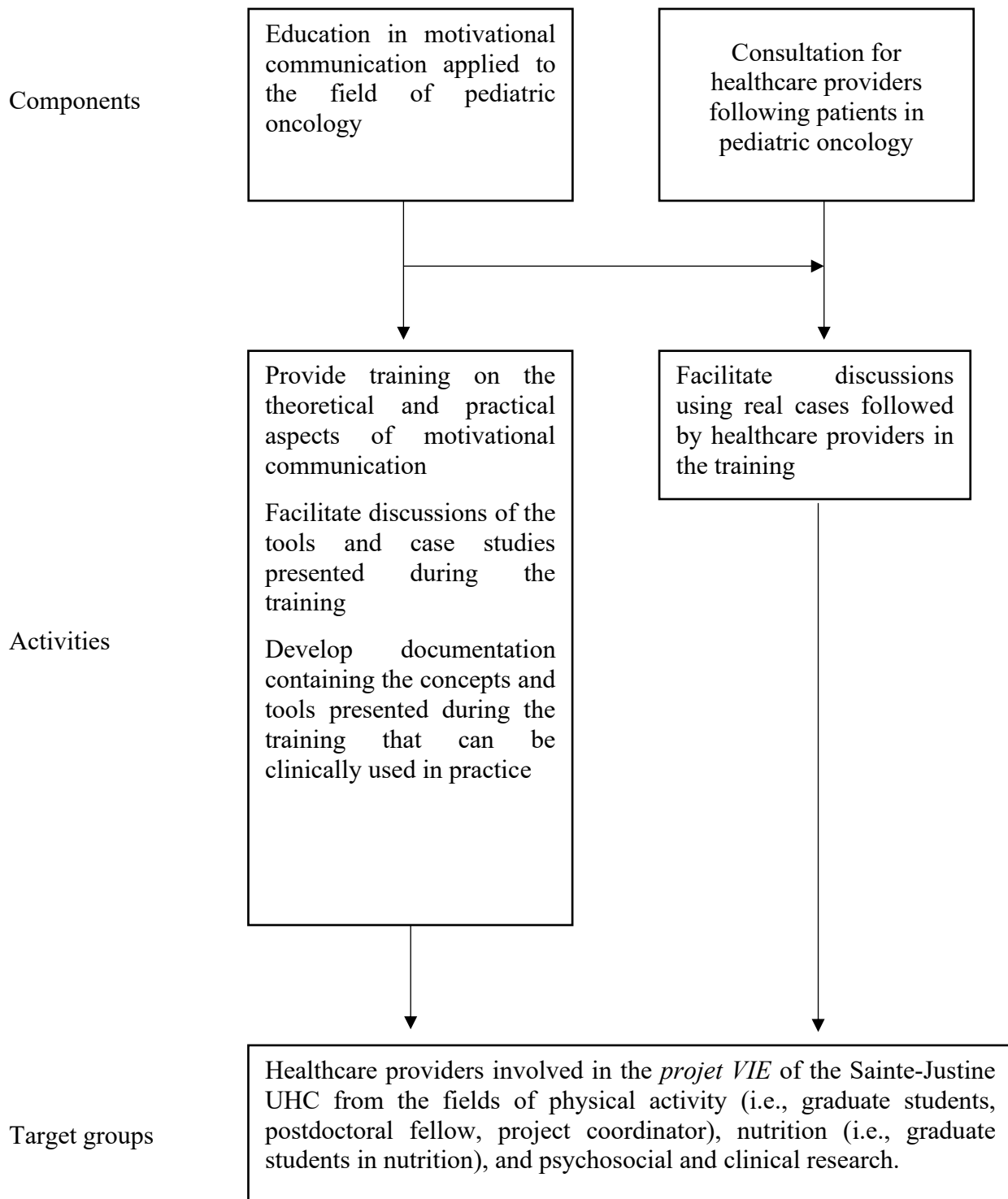
**Table 1** Themes, content, tools and activities of the *Motivation Cafés* training program, adapted from Miller and Rollnick (2013), and Laurin and Lavoie (2011)

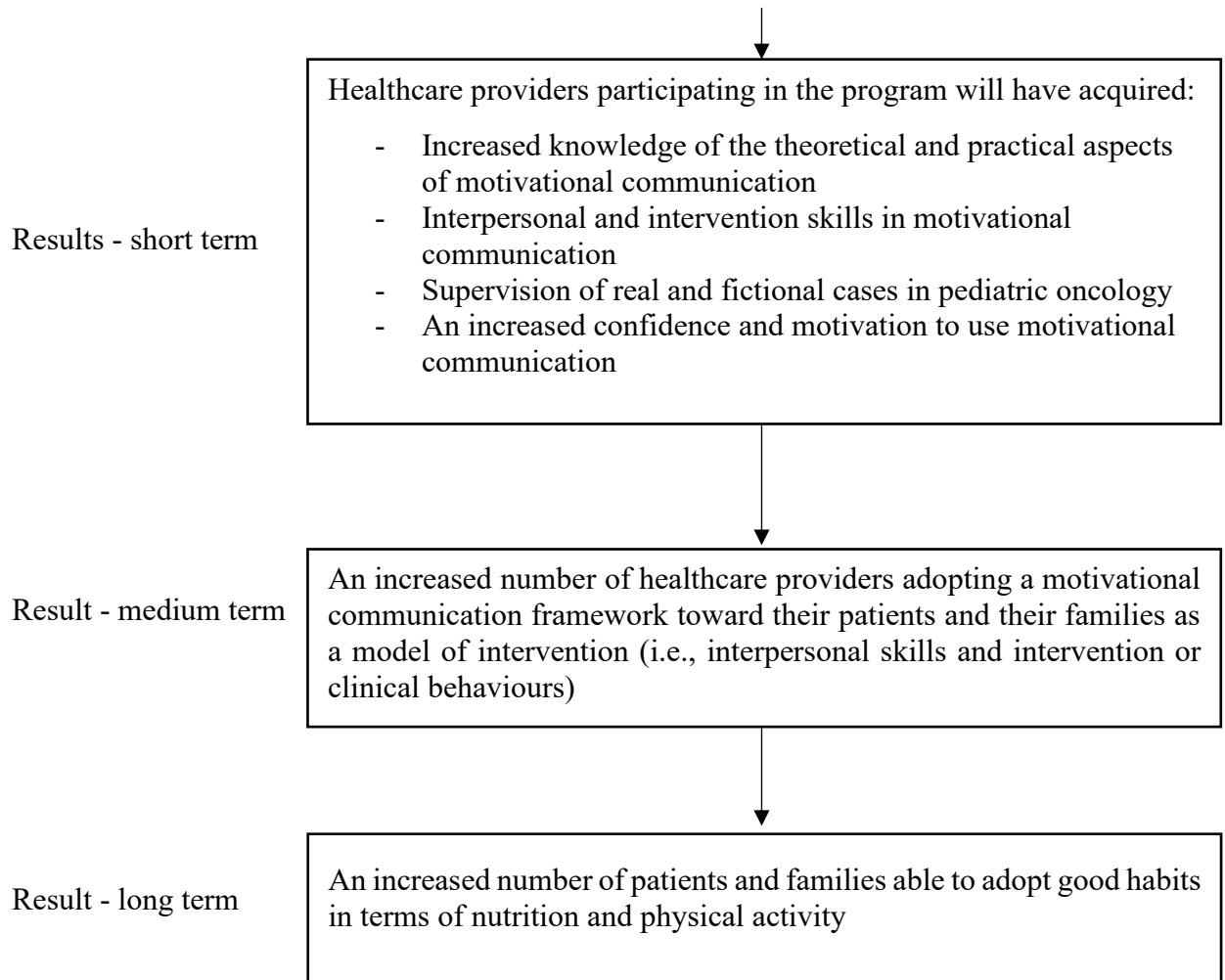
Session Themes		Content and Tools	Activities
1	Key factors of motivation and commitment	The scale of confidence and motivation (intention to change)	Theoretical presentation Practical exercises Role Playing and supervision Case of Elodie
2	Stages of change	Interventions based on the stages of change Sharing information: the DPD model	Presentation of the stages Role playing and supervision of real cases Case of Justin
3	Active listening	Reflective listening Summarizing	Theoretical presentation Role Playing and supervision of real cases Cases of Elodie and Gregory revisited Supervision
4	Questioning	Open-ended questions Affirmation	Theoretical presentation Role Playing and supervision of real cases Case of Ethan Supervision
5	Ambivalence	The decisional balance	Case of Oceane Role playing and supervision
6	Integration of acquired knowledge and competencies	Family intervention Conclusion	Theoretical presentation on family interventions Role Playing and supervision of real cases Case of Jasmée

Note: English and French clinical manuals are available as supplementary material online.

**Figure 1** Logic model: *Motivational Cafés*

As per the guidelines published in Dagenais & Ridde (2012).





### Inputs

- Financial resources: funding from the Psycho-Oncology Centre and the *projet VIE* of the Sainte-Justine UHC
- Human resources: a doctoral student in clinical psychology, a consultant in motivational communication, a research coordinator and a research assistant of the Psycho-Oncology Centre
- Physical resources: conference room at the Sainte-Justine UHC
- Material resources: computer with overhead projector, snacks (i.e., fruit, coffee, tea)

### Outputs

- Documentation for participants containing clinical concepts and tools presented during the training

Contributing factors: participation and reaction of participants (e.g., interest, satisfaction)

External factors: family responsibilities, personal and academic status (e.g., time, finances, etc.), unexpected (e.g., storms, natural disasters)

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