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Obesity

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The healthy weights initiative: A community-based, multi-disciplinary obesity reduction program that improves physical and mental health while promoting adherence through social support

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This community-based, multi-disciplinary obesity reduction program was developed after 153 community consultations and is offered to obese adults at no charge. Social support is strongly promoted: each participant is asked to sign up with a “buddy” and to complete a social support contract. During the initial 12 weeks, each individual receives 60 group exercise sessions, 12 group cognitive therapy sessions, and 12 group-dietary sessions with licensed professionals. During the second 12 week period, maintenance therapy includes 12 group exercise sessions. To date, 234 people have completed the program (79.1%). Mean objective reductions included 12.6 lbs of body fat, 3.1 inches from the waist, 2.6 inches from the hips, blood cholesterol by 0.3mmol/L, systolic blood pressure by 5.2 mmHg and diastolic by 2.5 mmHg. Depressed mood prevalence decreased from 45.7% to 11.7%; 84.5% of those who completed the program had improvements in health-related quality of life (HRQL), and significant increases in mean scores on eight dimensions of health were also observed (such as physical functioning, which increased by 15.5%). Using binary logistic regression, we were able to determine the independent risk factors for not completing the program (no social support contract and lower education); for not improving depressed mood after completion of the program (low general health); and for not improving HRQL after completion of the program (smoking and no buddy in program). Comprehensive obesity reduction programs can be effective when there is extensive consultation at the community level and social support at the individual level.

Biography

Mark Lemstra has completed eight university degrees: Bachelor of Science, a Master of Science in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, a PhD in Psychiatry, a Master of Science in Public Health, a Master of Science in Epidemiology, a Doctor of Science in Public Health, a Doctor of Science in Epidemiology and a PhD in Epidemiology.

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