

Online weight program boosted by behavioral feedback

October 29 2010, By Glenda Fauntleroy

In a time when deficits have reduced states' budgets and the services they can provide, a new study shows that the Internet might offer communities a low-cost way to motivate their overweight residents to lose pounds.

What remains unanswered, though, is whether online programs can do enough or if people need the kind of help that more costly face-to-face [weight loss](#) programs provide.

The new study, which appears online and in the December issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*, evaluated a community weight loss campaign in Rhode Island called Shape Up RI — an annual campaign to help Rhode Islanders lose weight and increase physical activity through an online competition held over 12 weeks.

The researchers studied 179 Shape Up RI participants who had an average body mass index of nearly 34, which classifies them as obese.

In one study arm, researchers assigned participants to the standard Shape Up RI program or to the program plus extra video lessons on weight loss. In the alternate study arm, participants were in either Shape Up RI or the standard program plus video lessons; daily self-monitoring of weight, eating and exercise; and computer-generated feedback.

“The addition of videos alone did lead to a small increase in weight loss, but the combination of the three strategies produced much better

outcomes,” said lead author Rena Wing, of the department of psychiatry and human behavior at the Warren Alpert Medical School at Brown University.

Wing and her colleagues found that adding just the video lessons in the first study did not produce any significant increase in weight loss. However, in the second study, with the addition of all three strategies, the group had an average weight loss more than double that of first study — 7.7 pounds compared with 3.1 pounds.

The number of participants who loss 5 percent or more of their body weight was also more than triple in the second study: 40.5 percent compared with 13.2 percent.

“This finding would suggest that education about diet and activity changes alone is important, but not sufficient,” Wing said.

Lawrence Cheskin, MD, director of the Johns Hopkins Weight Management Center at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, agreed that online programs such as Shape Up RI are worthy of duplication in communities to fight the obesity epidemic.

“I believe that in-person, individualized feedback and support is generally more likely to be effective than Web sites, but [these programs] can be of value, nonetheless, and certainly less costly,” Cheskin said.

More information: Wing R, et al. Improving weight loss outcomes of community interventions by incorporating behavioral strategies. *Am J Public Health* 100(12),2010.

Provided by Health Behavior News Service

Citation: Online weight program boosted by behavioral feedback (2010, October 29) retrieved 25 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-10-online-weight-boosted-behavioral-feedback.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.