

Joining a diet club could double weight loss

September 8 2011

Overweight and obese adults referred to the commercial weight loss programme Weight Watchers lost twice as much weight over a year than those who received standard care from GP practices alone, according to a new study by researchers at the Medical Research Council (MRC).

This study, involving adults in the UK, Germany and Australia, showed that [participants](#) who attended regular [Weight Watchers](#) meetings for twelve months lost an average of 6.7kg compared with 3.3kg for those who received standard care alone.

The trial was carried out at MRC Human Nutrition Research in Cambridge and recruited 772 patients who were randomly assigned either to Weight Watchers or to receive standard care. Those in the Weight Watchers group were more than three times as likely to lose at least five per cent of their body weight as those in the standard care group.

With the high and rapidly-rising rates of overweight and obesity, there is an urgent need for researchers to identify effective ways to lose excess weight and reduce a person's risk of developing type 2 diabetes and heart disease later in life.

Study participants in the UK who were not assigned to Weight Watchers received standard NHS-led care from GP practices which typically involved receiving leaflets about healthy eating and scheduled appointments with a nurse for weigh-ins and advice. Participants in both groups had their weight recorded at regular intervals throughout the year.

While standard care practices in the UK, Germany and [Australia](#) had differences, all three standard care groups showed a similar level of [weight loss](#) over the year.

Dr. Susan Jebb at the MRC Human Nutrition Research who led the study said: “We all know obesity is a big problem and that there’s a real need to find methods of diet control that work. Our study tested whether a partnership between the GP and a commercial programme (Weight Watchers) might work better than the current standard care, which was also shown to be effective. Weight Watchers may by no means be unique. We didn’t compare different commercial weight loss programmes in this study, but it is possible that similar programmes involving regular weight checks, goal-setting and peer support might achieve the same results. Further research is needed to examine long-term weight loss maintenance together with a formal analysis of cost-effectiveness. It is crucial that healthcare policy is supported by robust science. It’s trials like this that will provide evidence to help find the solutions for tackling the growing obesity epidemic.”

In 2009, the MRC highlighted the pressing need to develop effective strategies which will change lifestyles at an individual level. This requires the evaluation of programs that encourage behavior beneficial to health and discourage unhealthy choices.

The National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance on obesity (2006) highlighted gaps in research on the effectiveness of commercial weight loss programmes. It suggested partnerships between primary care organisations and commercial weight loss programmes could be beneficial and both research studies were specifically designed to examine this issue and measure real-life weight loss. The study was funded by Weight Watchers, however the research was completely independent and conducted on the agreement that the scientific results would be presented and published without interference

from Weight Watchers, whatever the outcome.

The study is published online today in *The Lancet*.

Provided by Medical Research Council

Citation: Joining a diet club could double weight loss (2011, September 8) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-09-diet-club-weight-loss.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.