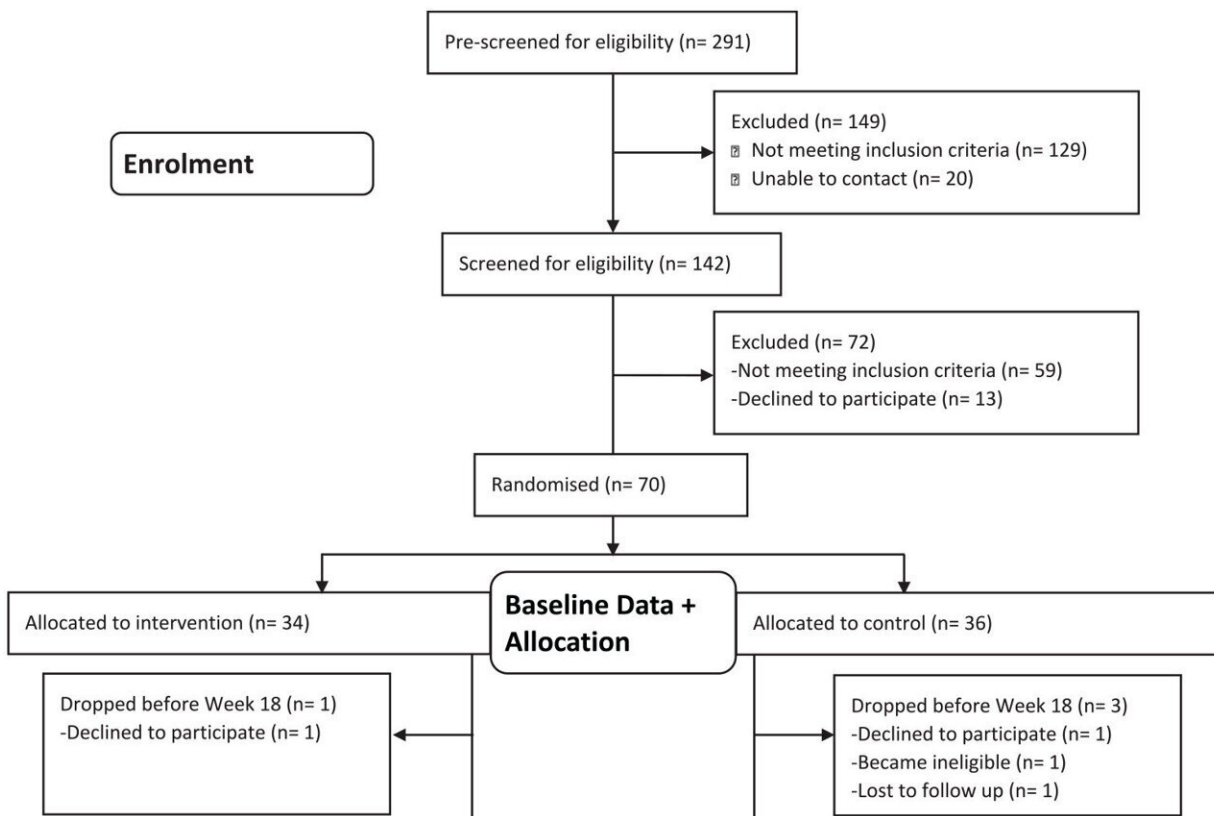


Study on 'whole health' approach informs new weight loss and wellness initiative

March 1 2023, by William Daehler



CONSORT diagram. This diagram details the recruitment, screening, enrollment and retention of participants (n = 36; n = 34). Credit: *Health Education Journal* (2022). DOI: 10.1177/00178969221139234

It can take years for health research findings to make their way into clinical care. But a new initiative led by a team from the Center for

Healthcare Policy and Research (CHPR) aims to narrow that gap.

CHPR's Koa Family Study demonstrated compelling results from a "whole health" approach to promoting [weight loss](#) among women with low income. The findings are the basis of a new initiative to launch March 2 at the UC Davis Health Folsom Clinic.

"We were thrilled with the Koa Family results," said Desiree Backman, the study's lead author and chief of the Prevention Policy and Practice Group (3PG) at CHPR. "Whole health is an approach to thinking about someone's [life experience](#): mind, body and spirit. It's not just about the food that you take in or physical activity you do. It's about day-to-day life, from healthy relationships to your mindset to overcoming adversity, building resilience, and getting better sleep. All these things need to be working together."

Koa family program

Results from the Koa Family Program were published in the *Health Education Journal* in 2022. The [randomized controlled trial](#) found significant health and well-being effects from the community-based, tele-wellness program focused on reducing obesity among women with low income. Study participants had an average weight loss of eight pounds over 25 weeks.

"Helping people make good food and [physical activity](#) choices is a start, but having that encapsulated into a 'whole health' approach is a unique characteristic of the Koa Family Program," Backman said. "To see the data support the concept was quite exciting."

The study included 70 women, ages 21-45, who were interested in weight loss. Researchers led weekly health education Zoom meetings and provided encouragement and support through texting and private

Facebook groups. The research team also facilitated [tree planting](#) and environmental stewardship activities for participants.

"It is a mistake to assume that obesity is simply calories in and calories out," said Neal Kohatsu, 3PG health strategist at CHPR. "In designing the program, we didn't start with obesity, we started with what's important to the individual and that's social connections with [family](#) and the community—it's about overall well-being."

Folsom clinic initiative

"The Folsom clinic project is about taking what we learned and applying it in a new setting, serving patients with a different demographic profile," Backman said.

The Folsom initiative is a weight loss and well-being program for women, as was the Koa Family Study. However, it is applying the "whole health" approach to women from moderate income households. Kohatsu noted that lessons from the earlier work are helping the 3PG team to deliver the program more efficiently, shortening the program to 15 weeks.

The 3PG team will be assisted by Folsom clinic staff and physicians led by Victor Baquero, medical director at the Folsom clinic, and Kristi Riddlesperger, practice manager at the Folsom clinic.

"I'm delighted to see the Koa Family Program launched at the Folsom Clinic with the strong support of Dr. Baquero. It shows how we translate best evidence into prevention practice at UC Davis Health," said Allen Hall, medical director for the UC Davis Health Community Physicians Group.

The 3PG team says there is potential for future expansion of the "whole

[health](#)" approach to patients beyond Folsom.

More information: Desiree R Backman et al, Achieving weight loss through a community-based, telewellness programme: A randomised controlled trial, *Health Education Journal* (2022). [DOI: 10.1177/00178969221139234](#)

Provided by UC Davis

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