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The Center for African American Health

The Lighten-Up Program:
Extreme Makeover to Lower Risks for Diabetes and Other Chronic Diseases
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1. BACKGROUND

- 65% of the US population is overweight including 55% of African-American women who are clinically obese. Being overweight can increase risk for cardiovascular diseases and diabetes and is a threat to overall health and quality of life.
- Many patients are advised by their health care provider to lose weight, exercise, quit smoking and eat a healthy diet. Many others attempt to make these necessary changes on their own but are unaware of ways to go about it. Unfortunately, one size does not fit all when attempting lifestyle changes that include nutrition and physical activity.
- In a previous project, "Extreme Makeover to Lower Risks for Diabetes", the participant population included individuals who were at risk for diabetes due to obesity, family history or predisposition to diabetes. The purpose of the project was to determine various approaches that would lower the risk of diabetes through promoting lifestyle change interventions that included: physical activity, a healthy diet and journaling of these activities. Logs to track steps were provided.
- Lessons learned related to Prochaska's Transtheoretical Model (1979) (also known as Stages of Change) and other strategies for future work. Various stages of change were observed from pre-contemplation to action all depending upon the client's priority (what they were truly committed to doing) vs. recommended steps to follow.

3. QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK




"What I learned is that attitude plays an important role in making life style changes. Initially, I was going to "diet" to get rid of 10 pounds. I did not view that task as a life style change because I thought it would be easy and wouldn't take long. Eight months later I had not lost... It takes more than just knowing what to do-it requires faith in knowing that being healthy is not a fleeting but a life long journey...faith to get started and faith to keep going". CP

"This has been the most inspirational program I have done in my lifetime. Although I knew my risk for eventually getting diabetes was high because of my family history, I had an idea that I was actually pre-diabetic. In the last 6 months, I have learned to decrease my sugar and starch intake. I also learned how to increase my exercise...I was encouraged and had someone to whom I was accountable. Thank you so much for such a timely, encouraging, knowledgeable way of decreasing my significantly high risk of diabetes." WS


4b. METHODS

THE LIGHTEN-UP MODEL

- Set appropriate goals for preventing weight gain
- Produce weight loss
- Maintaining weight lost
- Identify barriers to accomplishing goals
- Determining level of confidence to attain goal
- Journaling food intake
- Nutritional analysis and individual counseling
- Twice weekly aerobic sessions
- Individualized exercise techniques



2. DISCUSSION



Disease management has become an important strategy for managing the chronic illnesses of large populations. Typically, individuals who self-manage through chronic disease prevention programs and regular treatment require social and professional support through encouragement from family or others to accomplish their goals.

Education supports and other mechanisms through health care providers are often limited or non-existent; particularly in the case of African-Americans.

Lifestyle modifications through nutrition and physical activity do not exist in a vacuum. Many individuals try unsuccessfully to achieve better health status and treatment plan compliance.




The Lighten-Up program exists in response to the growing need for tailored disease management programs and is designed to assist participants to achieve improved health through a team approach involving shared attainable goals through cultural competence in the community setting.

4. METHODS

As a result of lessons learned from the Extreme Makeover to Lower Risks for Diabetes community program; the Lighten-Up pilot was implemented in cooperation with the Rising Star Missionary Baptist Church's Faith to be Healthy Initiative.

15 participants were recruited through church announcements and other community contacts. An orientation session was conducted and a fee of \$50 for the program collected. Participants were refunded \$1.00 for each pound lost during the pilot.

The 7-week project promoted lifestyle change interventions with individuals in pre-contemplation and contemplation and stages of change. The Lighten-Up program core values promote:

- Lifestyle changes
- Healthy eating habits
- Physical activities that can be sustained for life
- Documentation of food intake and physical activity

Participants were asked to journal physical activity and food intake throughout the seven week program. Each person was weighed and body measurements were taken at the beginning of the project. Twice weekly aerobics, cardio, and toning exercises was conducted by a trained physical activity specialist. A registered dietitian offered nutritional analysis of food diaries and provided nutrition counseling as needed. Participants were encouraged to walk or participate in other physical activities between sessions.

5. CHALLENGES

In spite of several limitations, the efficacy of the Lighten-Up pilot program seems promising. Some of the shortcomings of this work include:

- Recruiting participants into the program
- Convenient location to conduct sessions
- Lack of proper exercise equipment
- Compliance issues such as journaling

6. NEXT STEPS

MOVING FORWARD

- Promote lifestyle change and health benefits
- Encourage goal setting
- Support journaling
- Promote daily physical activity
- Provide nutritional analysis and counseling
- Model Lighten-Up program behaviors

FUTURE PLANS

- Maintain a community faith-based approach
- Continue to meet people where they are
- Inspire a shared vision with the participants
- Institutionalize the program in fine limited segments.
- Make adaptations to meet need of individuals

OUTCOMES:
3.7.06 – 5.9.06

- 7 participants maintained a journal of food consumed
- An average of 8 participants attended aerobics sessions twice per week
- The group lost a combined 64 inches (neck, thigh, calf, hip, waist and bust)
- Two members of the pilot lost an average of 18 pounds each

