Non-Diet Approach

Weight Management

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Title of Topic: Non-diet approaches vs. traditional diet approaches for weight management.

Stance: Non-diet approaches are more effective than traditional diet approaches for weight management.


Discussion of Topic:

Finding an effective, universal weight loss program for overweight and obese individuals is an ongoing battle. Traditional weight loss programs encourage caloric-restricted diets. However, over the years, an alternative, non-diet approach has sparked dieters and researchers interest. The study reviewed theorized that individuals following the non-diet approach would achieve the greatest weight loss.

This study recruited 59 participants for a 16-week long study and three month follow-up assessment. Participants were randomly selected based on eligibility criteria defined by overweight/obese (based on BMI $\geq 26 \text{ kg/m}^2$ & $\leq 40 \text{ kg/m}^2$) and sedentary lifestyles of less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week. Participants were rejected if they presented with serious health conditions/diseases (i.e. diabetes, thyroid, liver, or kidney disease), blood pressure $> 160/100 \text{ mmHg}$, medications that affect appetite or weight, lack of health insurance, and pregnancy.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three treatment groups. The three treatment groups included 1) a standard group that focused on traditional dieting approaches 2) an ASPIRE (Aspiring for Lifelong Health) group that focused on non-dieting approaches and 3) a control group that made no changes to their dietary or physical activity regimens.

The standard group met with a nutritionist for 20 minutes while the ASPIRE group met with a lifestyle coach for 20 minutes. Each group set caloric restrictions to promote weight loss, however the participants in the standard group were assigned caloric restrictions of $<1600 \text{ kcal/day}$ for women and $<2000 \text{ kcals/day}$ for the men whereas the participants in the ASPIRE group set their own energy intake goals. The participants in the ASPIRE group set caloric restrictions ranging from 1500-2200 kcals/day for the women and 1900-2600 kcals/day for the men.

Both groups received identical aerobic- and resistance-training exercise programs in addition to their caloric restrictions. Other than the same exercise program, the two groups took on different approaches to weight management. The participants in the standard group received nutrition education solely based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans developed by the US Department of Health and Human Services. The
participants in the ASPIRE group were encouraged to make small lifestyle changes such as eliminating high fat dairy and meat products, increasing fruit and vegetable consumption, reducing soda intake, and eating correct portion sizes of food items.

They study’s primary outcome variables included weight, waist circumference, and percent abdominal fat. At the end of the study, participants in the ASPIRE group showed the greatest improvement. They lost the most weight, the most abdominal fat, and their waist circumference decreased significantly more than the standard group. In addition to the initial weight loss, only participants in the ASPIRE group continued to lose weight after the study.

**Bottom Line:**

Non-diet approaches to weight management that focuses on making small, realistic changes in diet and physical activity result in modest but sustainable weight loss. The findings in this study regarding successfully weight loss strategies coincide with the American Dietetic Associations guidelines that state individualized goals of weight loss therapy should be realistic, achievable, and sustainable (Seagle, H. M. et al, 2009).

**Opportunities for the RD/DTR:**

Dietetic professionals have the responsibility to work closely with their clients to create individualized weight management plans. Dietary and physical activity modifications should be based on small, realistic goals.
References

