

Tackling Obesity via Workplace Health Promotion

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The Curtin University Healthy Lifestyle Program is a worksite health promotion program that has been advocating a supportive environment and healthy behaviours for 20 years

A multifaceted approach to overweight and obesity has been used including:

- an Accredited Practising Dietitian available for one-to-one dietary consultations with staff
- an email newsletter "Eat for Life" distributed to staff which focused on healthy lifestyle changes such as choosing healthy food more often and increasing physical activity
- environmental changes to make healthy choices easier on campus. University food outlets agreed to modify their menus and provided more healthy food choices
- encouraging all staff to stay within the healthy weight range to reduce their risk of heart disease and diabetes



The Curtin Healthy Lifestyle Program is based on an ecological health promotion approach incorporating principles of the Ottawa Charter^{1,5}.



Celebrating achieving goal weight together Curtin University staff and group leaders.

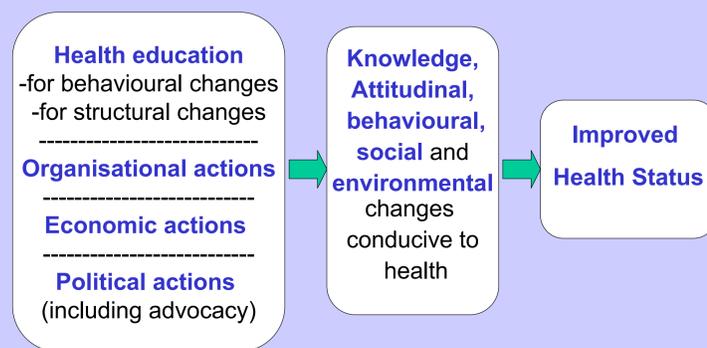
A weekly weightloss support group commenced in 2003. Lunchtime seminars raised awareness of the need to eat healthy food and increase physical activity (especially walking).

The program was tailored specifically to the University environment and working life. Participants were positive about group sessions as they "kept you on track", you "learnt from other's tips and pitfalls", gained support from other staff and the staff dietitian.

Participants lost up to 20+kg each over a year, have kept the weight off and now act as role models for others. One participant became a State finalist in the WeightWatchers' 2005 Slimmer of the Year. Two others won the Australian "Friends" category for WeightWatchers' Australia 2005 Slimmer of the Year.



Definition of Health Promotion²



The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion^{2,4} and the Curtin Healthy Lifestyle Program^{2,4}

Building Healthy Public Policy
 Putting health on the agenda and ensuring policies exist to support healthy behaviours. Examples include the healthy lifestyle policy enabling staff to attend healthy activities during work time.

Creating Supportive Environments
 Ensuring that the workplace encourages healthy behaviours via the cultural norms as well as the built environment. Enables healthy choices regarding physical activity and diet to be made easily.

Strengthening Community Action
 Empowerment of staff to be involved, plus enhancement of self-help and social support within the community via walking groups, WeightWatchers' meetings and formation of a Vegetarian Club.

Developing Personal Skills
 Provision of information, education for health and life skills enabling staff to make informed decisions about their health. Health education re diet and physical activity is an important aspect of this key area.

Reorienting Health Services
 Working together via intersectoral collaboration to enable positive health outcomes. Community groups, health professionals, health services and non health areas all contributing to the pursuit of health. Focus on prevention of illness and promotion of a healthy lifestyle.

References:

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