PROJECT INFORMATION

November 2020

Testing an Online Program with and without Health Management Support to Help Patients Manage Their Weight

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Organization

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What was the research about?

Patients who are above a healthy weight may benefit from weight loss support. But doctors have limited time during clinic visits to support weight management.

In this study, the research team compared three ways to help patients manage their weight outside the clinic:

- **BMIQ.** BMIQ is an online weight management program with meal plans, menus, and a weight tracker. It also includes 33 educational sessions on topics such as coping with food cravings and learning portion control. BMIQ is available in English and Spanish.
- **BMIQ plus support from a health manager.** The health manager checked patients' progress with BMIQ, called patients monthly, and offered patients brief meetings with a dietitian. The health manager also reached out to patients if they didn't watch educational sessions or track their weight on BMIQ.
- **Usual care.** Patients received written information about weight management by mail, including general advice about exercise and healthy eating.

What were the results?

After one year, patients using BMIQ plus support lost more weight than patients using BMIQ alone or those receiving usual care. On average, patients using BMIQ plus support lost about seven pounds. Patients using

BMIQ alone lost about four pounds, and patients receiving usual care lost about three.

Compared with both usual care and BMIQ alone, BMIQ plus support also had greater increases in

- Percent weight change
- Proportion of patients who lost at least 5 percent of their weight
- Confidence in ability to lose weight

Patients in the three groups didn't differ in changes in

- Quality of life related to their weight
- How healthy they felt
- Risk factors for heart disease, such as blood pressure or blood sugar levels
- The types of foods they ate or how often they exercised

After 18 months, changes were similar, except weight loss, which was greater in patients who received usual care than in those who received BMIQ alone.

Who was in the study?

The study included 840 patients with high blood pressure or type 2 diabetes who had overweight or obesity. Of these, 76 percent were white, 10 percent

were black, and 5 percent reported another race; also, 6 percent were Hispanic. The average age was 59, and 60 percent were women. Patients received care at 1 of 24 primary care clinics in the Boston area.

What did the research team do?

The research team assigned clinics by chance to use BMIQ, BMIQ plus support, or usual care. Patients used the method assigned to their clinic. At the start of the study and again 6, 12, and 18 months later, the team looked at health records, and patients completed surveys.

Patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals gave input on the study.

What were the limits of the study?

The study didn't have enough patients to detect differences in some outcomes.

All patients in the study had high blood pressure or type 2 diabetes. Future studies could include patients with other health problems.

How can people use the results?

Clinics can use the results when considering ways to offer weight management support.

To learn more about this project, visit www.pcori.org/Baer343.