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Weight Loss: The Problem with the Study

Continuing our look at the recently published study “Efficacy of Commercial Weight-Loss Programs: An Updated Systematic Review,” there was a significant problem with the study and most likely, not in the way you might think. I saw no problem with the statistics or measurement variables as sometimes happens. It wasn’t a meta-analysis, so there were no issues in study selection. In my opinion, it goes back to the intent of the study.

In an editorial in the same edition of the journal, the author reported that the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, the American Heart Association, the American College of Cardiology, and the Obesity Society have all recommended that clinicians screen patients with a BMI greater than 30 or more and either offer or refer them to a comprehensive weight loss program based on changing lifestyles (2). The actual purpose of the study was to provide information to physicians so they can recommend an effective, commercially available weight loss program to their patients based on the research. Therefore, based on those criteria, there were only two programs that had enough research to warrant recommendations.



While the researchers satisfied the criteria of providing evidence-based information to clinicians, and no doubt thrilled the owners of both programs, the researchers missed a tremendous opportunity to help the people they really want to help: the patients. I’ll explain on Saturday.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

References:

1. Ann Intern Med. 2015;162(7):501-512. doi:10.7326/M14-2238.
2. Ann Intern Med. 2015;162(7):522-523. doi:10.7326/M15-0429.

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