Nothing “TOPS” Our Weight Loss: Establishing a Take off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) Chapter at Lincoln Community Health Center

ABSTRACT

- Obesity is a national health concern that disproportionately affects patients living in low-income communities. As a team, Dr. Howard Eisenson and I chartered a free weight-loss support group, Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) in order to serve some of Durham’s most impoverished patients. TOPS members were given resources to prepare economical and healthy meals in order to achieve their weight loss goals. Additionally, each week TOPS members met for private weigh-ins and an opportunity to share thoughts on their weight loss journey in a community setting, providing support and also encouraging accountability.

- The program was successful in that 80% of active members achieved weight loss and most members indicated that they have a better understanding of what types of foods make up a nutritious diet, have begun to incorporate exercise into their weekly routines, decreased their fast food consumption, and feel cared for and supported by the TOPS program.

- Future studies include the charter of the “TOPS in Place” Program, which will bring a TOPS chapter to a public housing community and examine changes in weight, diabetes, and cardiovascular risk factors in that population.

BACKGROUND

- 2/3 of people in the United States are either overweight or obese.

- Obesity is a risk factor for chronic health conditions including Type 2 Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease, Stroke, and Depression.

- Obesity disproportionately affects people from lower-income areas.

- TOPS is a national non-profit support group for people dedicated to help people lose weight.

- Since its inception, the TOPS program has helped millions of people across the country lose weight.

- TOPS members are given resources to prepare economical and healthy meals in order to achieve their weight loss goals.

- Each week TOPS members meet for private weigh-ins and an opportunity to share thoughts on their weight loss journey in a community setting.

OBJECTIVES

- To establish a TOPS chapter at Lincoln Community Health Center at no cost to patients.

- To maintain 75% member retention.

- To provide resources to help members lose weight.

- To educate participants on nutrition and the components of a healthy diet.

- To encourage participants to engage in weekly exercise.

- To promote healthy dietary choices and less fast-food consumption.

- To provide an outlet for participants to fellowship and discuss their weight-loss journey.

METHODS

- Secured funding for the program through donations and funds raised through the “Stead Tread” a 5K race.

- Informed providers at Lincoln about the program and began participant recruitment.

- Conducted weekly meetings with members discussing healthy eating habits, physical exercise activities, and motivational and wellness activities.

RESULTS

- A: Picture of TOPS Group after a weekly meeting.

- B: Picture of TOPS leader (me) and our “biggest loser” who has lost almost 20lbs.

“I thank God every day for this program! I’ve struggled with weight loss my whole life but this program and the people in this program have truly supported me.” – TOPS Participant

CONCLUSIONS

- Establishing the TOPS chapter at Lincoln Community Health Center was successful in that most members:

  - Lost weight

  - Understand the components of a healthy diet

  - Exercise more frequently

  - Eat less fast food

  - Have a safe space to discuss their weight loss journey