

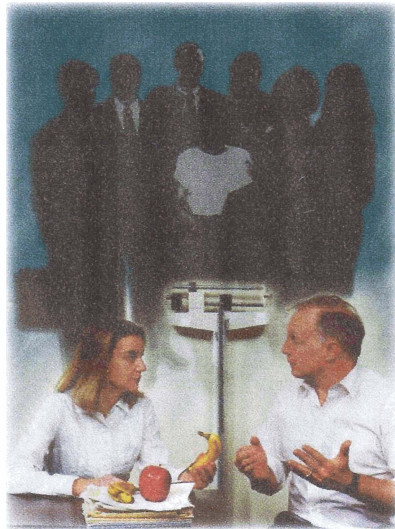
Pharmacists' Weight Loss Program for Employee Worksites

A prospective, multisite, weight loss program managed by a clinical pharmacist team can be financially rewarding, reports Steven T. Boyd, PharmD, BCPS, CDE, CDM, Assistant Professor of Clinical Pharmacy at the College of Pharmacy at Xavier University of Louisiana and a clinical pharmacist at Causey's Pharmacy in Natchitoches, Louisiana. This weight loss program was one of several clinical pharmacy programs that Dr. Boyd and LeAnn Causey Boyd, PharmD, BCPS, CDE, CDM, Director of Clinical Services at Causey's Pharmacy, successfully marketed to two local employers. These employers assisted with participant recruitment, provided space, and paid the program fees.¹

The 5-month weight loss program included an initial weigh-in and four follow-up weigh-ins conducted by the pharmacist, an optional meal planning meeting with a dietitian, monthly prizes for patients who lost the most weight, and weigh-in door prizes.

At each weigh-in, pharmacists provided brief educational interventions on weight loss topics. Nutritional advice included eating less fast food, increasing intake of fruits and vegetables, and suggestions for healthful snacks. The pharmacists stressed the importance of gradual weight loss and lifestyle modifications to achieve weight loss. To support regular physical activity, the employers agreed to pay half the cost of a gym membership for employees enrolled in the program. At each visit with the pharmacists, patients received ongoing support and encouragement. At the final visit, patients were encouraged to maintain healthful lifestyle modifications.

A total of 274 patients were enrolled in the program, and the overall 5-month retention rate was 30%. Employees who completed the program lost an average of 4 lb ($P < .0001$). Although the average weight loss was modest, some patients experienced substantial weight loss. The 10 participants with the greatest weight reduction lost more than 170 lb combined, and two participants lost about 30 lb each. "One of these participants told me he felt so much better following the weight loss and was grateful that he had the opportunity to participate in the program,"



reports Dr. Boyd.

Dr. Boyd emphasized the importance of adapting the program to fit within the dynamics of each employer. For example, at one employer, participants work at desks and can break for a meeting with the pharmacist at the same time, which allows for longer group interventions. In contrast, participants at another employer work in a factory. Because the employer does not want to shut down the factory to have the employees meet as a group, the pharmacists provide brief individualized sessions to these participants.

Surprisingly, many participants were reluctant to attend the free meeting with the dietitian. "This was because they felt

they already had the knowledge about how to lose weight and did not want to be lectured about their diets," Dr. Boyd observes. Even though participants may have a good existing knowledge base, they often lack strategies to help them apply this knowledge.

To address this issue, Dr. Boyd and his team are currently involved in programs designed to increase motivation and encourage patients to adopt healthful behaviors. For example, Dr. Boyd states that you have to "pave a path to exercise." This involves inviting patients to exercise, giving them a membership at a fitness center (typically paid for by the employer), scheduling visits to the gym, and providing a support network.² Dr. Boyd reports that this comprehensive approach can contribute to the adoption of healthful lifestyle behaviors, and it supports weight loss and improvement in other clinical parameters.

The weight loss program has been profitable for the pharmacists and the satisfied employers have contracted with the pharmacy to run additional programs.

References

1. Boyd S, Boyd L, Raker K. Evaluation of a pharmacists' weight loss program for employee worksites. *J Am Pharm Assoc.* 2007;47:217. Abstract 57.
2. Boyd ST, Scott DM, Augustine SC. Exercise for low-income patients with diabetes: a continuous quality improvement project. *Diabetes Educ.* 2006;32:385-93.

Disclaimer

The intent of this section is to highlight an innovative pharmacy practice. Its purpose is not to promote a specific pharmacy or pharmacist. Other pharmacists may provide a similar service.