



Communication strategies used in a weight management program at National Healthcare Group Polyclinics

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Background:

NHG Polyclinics conduct annual health screening for staff. In September 2007, 272 (43%) staff were found to have body mass index , BMI \geq 23kg/m². They were invited to join an in-house weight management program.

Aims:

- To look at
 - 1) strategies used to encourage participation
 - 2) staff response to invitations to join the program
 - 3) staff feedback of the program

Methods:

Invitation letters were sent to all eligible staff. The response slips were returned to headquarters.

To encourage participation, the team:

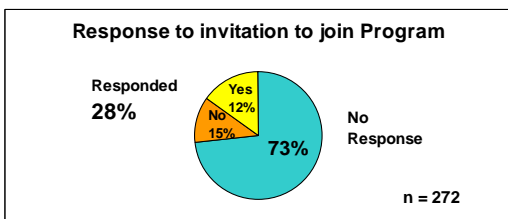
- Ensured that the program was affordable.
- Asked their supervisors to allow staff to attend the program during office hours
- Advised the supervisors to encourage staff to sign up

When the program ended, the author met the participants to get their feedback.

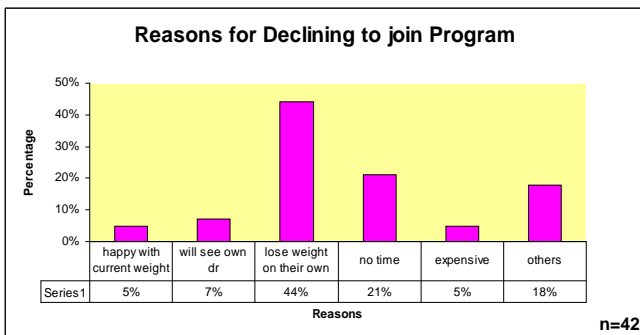
Results:

A) Response to invitations

272 invitations were sent. 33(12%) signed up. 42 (15%) declined.



B) Reasons for declining

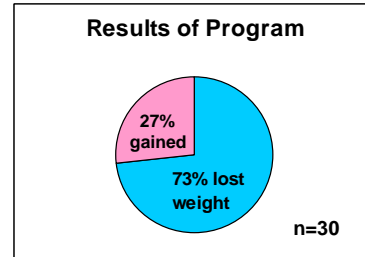


Other reasons included:

- Unable to join because of other pre-existing medical problems
- They have lost weight on their own since the screening.

C) Results of the program

Of the 33 who signed up, 30 (91%) completed the program. 22(73%) lost weight.



Amount of weight lost	No. (%)
0 - 1.9kg	6 (20%)
2 - 3.9kg	15 (50%)
\geq 4kg	1 (3%)

D) Staff feedback

The author met 22 (73%) of them. 16 (73%) would recommend the program to their family/friends.

Some of their requests:

1. More group exercises
2. Programs in other languages.
3. Conduct programs after office hours & at their workplace.
4. Tailor the program to suit each staff.
5. Staff conducting sessions should be passionate, enthusiastic & able to motivate them.

Learning points:

1. More studies should be done to find out what factors will motivate participants to sign up for these programs.
2. A working environment that enables healthy living (e.g. healthier food at the canteen, on-going exercise programs etc) will make it easier for staff to make healthy living a habit.
3. Visible support (including participation in the programs) from management is important.
4. An IT system/program is necessary to manage/track the data for large groups of participants.

Conclusion:

Engaging staff to join a weight management program is challenging. The experience & staff feedback will be used to improve subsequent WHP programs in NHGP.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank all clinic members of the Watch Our Weight team , allied health and nursing staff who helped run the program.

