KU Weight Management Program Updates

By Dr. Joseph Donnelly

The Weight Control Research Project (WCRP) was initiated in 1986 at The University of Nebraska-Kearney with a grant from The National Institutes of Health (NIH) to investigate the effects of large scale weight loss on body composition - the relative ratios of fat and lean tissue. WCRP also provided behavioral weight management programs from 1986 until 1997 when the lead investigator moved to Lawrence Kansas and renamed the research and clinical program The Kansas Weight Management Program.

Since 1997 16 NIH grants and numerous industry and foundation grants have been completed to further investigate effective treatments for weight loss and maintenance. Since 1997 we have provided behavioral weight management programs both in Lawrence and Kansas City.

In 2011 our research and behavioral group moved to The University of Kansas Medical Center (KUMC) and is located in Kirmayer in the former Orthopedic Sports Medicine Clinic. We continue to maintain our facilities in Lawrence as well and we operate from both sites. Importantly, in 2014 we added an Internal Medicine physician to our programs to provide expertise in the simultaneous management of weight and multiple chronic conditions that frequently accompany overweight.

The program is growing rapidly and we are opening a satellite at KUMC MedWest and are discussing sites in Liberty and in Overland Park. Hard work by a highly trained staff has resulted in a high ranking of our clinic for patient satisfaction. We will continue to investigate the most effective strategies for weight management and incorporate successful strategies into our clinics to provide state-of-the-art treatment.
In the 1970’s, Americans began to gradually increase in weight and in turn, a need for weight loss diets became apparent. The goal in any weight loss diet is to decrease the individuals' total caloric intake. As fat has the most calories per gram out of the macronutrients, many experts decided that in order to decrease total caloric intake, you needed to decrease the amount of fat you consume. This started the low-fat diet craze.

Food manufacturers realized that everyone wanted to buy low-fat food items, so to increase profits they started creating an abundance of low-fat foods. In order to make these foods palatable, they added extra carbohydrates and calories to them. The average American diet became very high in carbohydrates and low in fat, however the obesity rates continued to rise. Some doctors made hasty assumptions and decided that the carbohydrates were leading to weight gain, which led us to the low-carb craze.

Low-carb diets became popular because they create the illusion of quick weight loss since carbohydrates store more water than other macronutrients. Therefore, as you decrease your carbohydrate stores, you decrease the amount of water in your body. The scale shows a decrease in weight however, you didn't really lose any pounds. Low-carb diets can work because individuals typically respond well to having to eliminate whole categories of food because they limit variety and decision-making. In low-carb diets, you often cannot eat many foods so you simply eat less. However, low-carb diets carry risks. Because these diets are lower in fiber and lack critical nutrients, you may find yourself facing an increased risk of cancers and osteoporosis. A low-carb diet can also be hard on the kidneys and the heart because of increases in saturated fat and protein intake.

So should you go on a low-carb diet? Probably not. The only way to lose weight is to eat less than you burn. For some people, a low-carb diet helps them eat less overall, but eating less can also be accomplished by monitoring your portion sizes and choosing a healthy, balanced diet.

When you cut a whole food group out of your diet, you lose important nutrients that your body needs. Unless you are planning to cut out that food group for life, you may struggle and regain weight when you reintroduce it into your diet. The best diet is going to be the diet that works for you and is one that you can follow through your entire lifetime- not just for a few months.
The growth of KU Weight Management Programs has brought forth many updates and changes! We hope to continue the growth by continuously offering information sessions at our clinics in both Lawrence and Kansas City. Much to our surprise this has brought about the idea of holding noon hour classes at our clinics. We are excited that there are individuals who are willing to spend their lunch break with us!

Water vs. Sports Drinks
By Erik Willis

Water is the body’s main component making up 60 percent of your body weight. Hydration status is important during exercise and may become unbalanced under exercising conditions in which sweat losses are not matched by fluid intake and this may lead to dehydration.

Sports drinks, such as Gatorade or Powerade, are commonly marketed to maintain hydration levels during exercise because they contain a mix of carbohydrates, electrolytes (sodium, chloride and potassium), and water. However, plain water intake will likely be an appropriate zero-calorie rehydration choice for the majority of healthy individuals who follow adequate nutritional habits. Sports drinks do not offer many additional health benefits compared to water when exercising less than 60 minutes. In addition, they can be more expensive and are usually high in calories and in sugar content. A typical sports drink contains 90 to 125 calories. So if you’re brisk walking 3 miles and burning approximately 300 calories, chugging a sports drink will halve your calorie expenditure.

However, there are situations when sport drinks are preferred for hydration over water. Sports drinks are preferred when exercising anywhere from 60 minutes to several hours, or during intermittent high intensity exercises because they can help replace the electrolytes (sodium, chloride and potassium) lost from sweat, specifically sodium. In the end, the proper choice of beverage for exercise depends on level of intensity and the duration. Proper fluid intake before, during, and after exercise is an important factor in maintaining hydration levels.

Spring Into Action!
By Dr. Amanda Szabo

Spring is the perfect time to “spring to action,” get off the couch and get back on track with your diet and exercise routine. Warm weather is just around the corner, but that doesn’t mean that you have to wait for it to arrive to get back on track. Work on getting outside, weather permitting, to walk, jog, bike or dowhatever you enjoy. There is no better time than the present. If you need motivation, sign up for a 5k or other physical activity to help motivate you (see http://www.kcrunningcompany.com/calendar/) for opportunities near you. You might even consider purchasing a fitness tracker to help keep you on 'track (see http://fitness-trackers.specout.com) for ideas). As for your diet, spring fruits and vegetables have already started popping up in stores so take advantage of the freshness and the bargains. Don't forget to check out farmer's markets (see https://fromthelandofkansas.com/explore-from-land-kansas to find the location nearest you). Better yet, spring is the perfect time to plant your own garden or join a co-op of individuals so you don't have to do all the work yourself.

Spring is a great time to turn over a new leaf and get back on track with your health and wellness goals. If you are still at a loss, the Center for Physical Activity and Weight management is here for you. We can help you get your health and your weight back on track! Email us at weightloss@ku.edu
Spring Success Story: Bonnie

"Around six months ago I was told that my cholesterol levels were high...I had been gaining weight. In January I started the KU Weight Loss Program [and] I have lost around 32lbs. I am now breathing better as well as moving better. My doctor had some lab work done and said that my cholesterol levels have come down and my kidney and liver functions are better. He told me to stay with the KU Weight Loss Program...one of my doctors told me that I now look better than the first time he met me."

-Bonnie,
KU Weight Management Participant