



Scientific Abstracts

Short-Term Impact of a Church-Based Approach to Lifestyle Change on Cardiovascular Risk in African Americans

Ethnicity and Disease 2000(10): 17-23

While lifestyle modification decreases cardiovascular risk, there are barriers to lifestyle education in usual clinical practice, especially among the medically underserved. To address this gap, "Lighten Up", a church-based lifestyle program was developed in collaboration with the local African-American Christian community. Lighten Up includes a baseline health assessment (week 1), eight educational sessions (weeks 2-9) combining study of scripture and a health message, a short-term health check (week 10) and a long-term health check (week 52). Baseline and 10 week risk factor data have been obtained in 133 African Americans from eight sites (83% women) and form the basis of this report. At baseline, 76% of participants had two or more modifiable risk factors (overweight, hypertension, borderline high cholesterol, or diabetes). The entire group had significant short-term reductions in weight (-2.3 pounds, $p < 0.01$), and triglycerides (-11 mg/dl, $p < 0.05$). Risk factor improvement was greater among the 60 subjects who attended 75% or more of the educational sessions. In this group, weight fell 2.9 ± 0.6 pounds (mean \pm SEM; $p < 0.01$) mean BP declined 3.8 ± 1.2 mm Hg ($p < 0.01$), total cholesterol was lowered 6 ± 4 mg/dl ($p = 0.12$), and triglycerides were reduced 17 ± 9 mg/dl ($p < 0.05$). Lighten Up is reaching a group with multiple cardiovascular risk factors that is not optimally managed by existing healthcare resources. Of the 133 participants, 70% attended half or more on the sessions, and several components of the risk factor cluster were favorably affected.

Efficacy of a Church-Based Intervention on Cardiovascular Risk Reduction

Ethnicity and Disease 2001 (11 Supplement): 817-822

"Lighten Up", a church-based lifestyle program, was developed in collaboration with the Christian community to decrease cardiovascular risk through lifestyle modification. One goal has been to reach the medically underserved in North and South Carolina. Lighten Up, includes a baseline health check (week 1), eight educational sessions (weeks 2-9) combining a study of scripture and health messages, a short-term health check (week 10) and a long-term health check (1 year). Baseline and 10 week data has been obtained in 381 participants (66% Black, 83% women, and 55 years of age) at 24 sites and form the basis of this report. One-year data has been obtained in a subgroup of 163 participants (64% Black, 82% women, and 57 years of age). At baseline, participants had significant modifiable risk factors of obesity (73%), high blood pressure (55%), high cholesterol (48%) and diabetes (19%). There were significant short-term reductions in weight and systolic blood pressure, which were sustained throughout one year. Half or more sessions were attended by 70% of participants. Participants, who attended more sessions, had the greatest reductions in risk factors. Whites appear to have greater reductions in risk factors than Blacks. However, Lighten Up, is reaching both Blacks and Whites with multiple cardiovascular risk factors and short and long-term improvements are being made.