

## Walking with Obese Patients: An Innovative Method of Motivational Interviewing

Yu Kwan Chan, MD<sup>a</sup>, Shelley L. Galvin, MA<sup>b</sup>, Sue Stigleman, MLS<sup>c</sup>, Aaron Vaughan, MD<sup>a</sup>  
Mountain Area Health Education Center, Asheville, North Carolina

<sup>a</sup>Division of Family Medicine, <sup>b</sup>Center for Research, and <sup>c</sup>Library and Knowledge Services

**Objective:** To describe a pilot intervention to improve care for obese patients that uses motivational counseling delivered during walks with the participant's health provider.

**Methods:** Patients, with a BMI greater than 30, of one third-year Resident of the MAHEC Family Health Center, were invited to participate. The intervention consisted of one-on-one motivational counseling during a light outdoor walk with the doctor. Participants completed pre- and post-intervention surveys of motivation, readiness to change and confidence in ability to adopt healthier lifestyle strategies.

**Results:** Seventeen adult patients completed pre-intervention surveys. For the 6 patients who walked, pre- versus post-intervention comparison indicated a non-significant increase in motivational scores ( $63.7 \pm 2.4$  vs.  $69.3 \pm 8.1$ ;  $p=0.173$ ). Four improved motivation while two reported diminished motivation. At the onset, walkers ( $n=6$ ) were not more motivated than non-walkers ( $n=11$ ;  $62.2 \pm 4.7$  vs.  $63.7 \pm 2.4$ , respectively,  $p=0.404$ ). Walkers' comments about the intervention were very positive.

**Conclusions:** This small pilot project found that patients appreciated this combination of light physical activity and motivational interviewing for obese patients. The implementation and evaluation of the intervention warrant improvements for further study with larger sample; participant incentives and additional, dedicated resources for recruitment, monitoring, and assessment should be considered.

Key Words: Walking, Obesity, Physician-Patient Relations, Motivation