



# THE BRITISH DIETETIC ASSOCIATION

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# Media Release

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19 January 2009

## 'Readiness to Change' the secret to successful weight loss

Dieters who started the New Year with good intentions to shed a few pounds after the Christmas binge are likely to fail if they are not determined, motivated or not genuinely ready to change, according to a leading dietetic researcher.

A study published in the latest edition of the *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics*<sup>1</sup> by Dr Mary Hickson, Catherine Macqueen and Prof Gary Frost found that the diet regimen and clinic setting was less important than attitude when it came to losing weight. Additionally the report found that those who did not 'choose to lose' were more likely to succeed if they attended an intensive weight management programme under the supervision of a dietitian.

The study compared the weight loss achievements of obese patients in two different 'real life' clinical settings at the Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust in London. It involved patients being referred for weight loss advice being given either an intensive weight management scheme, or being given standard dietetic outpatient support and monitoring. Analysis for all patients attending at least one session showed that intensive weight management was more likely to result in weight loss.

Dr Mary Hickson, lead researcher of the project, comments that although the comparison of the two clinic styles does not fulfil the strict criteria of a randomised controlled trial, it provides pragmatic data from a NHS clinic, reflecting what is happening in routine practice (which may be different from studies carried out in clinical trials of weight loss).

"It may be that for overweight patients who 'choose to lose', the type of clinic support is less important. However for less motivated overweight patients, a more tightly structured weight loss clinic seems more likely to result in some weight loss" concluded Dr Hickson. She suggested that some screening of overweight patients for readiness to change may be helpful. More research was urgently needed on the identification of motivating factors for weight loss, and on the management of concerns and relapses that may relate to the general high rates of drop out and non attendance.

Of the patients referred for weight reducing advice, more than half booking onto the intensive weight management sessions and completed the course compared to less than one fifth of those attending general dietetic sessions. One third failed to book an initial appointment. Weight loss for obese patients who attended at least five sessions of either clinic were similar.

**Media enquiries to the British Dietetic Association should be directed to our media hotline on 0870 580 2517 or [pr@bda.uk.com](mailto:pr@bda.uk.com)**

### **Notes to Editors**

1. M. Hickson, C. Macqueen, G. Frost (2009) Evaluation of attendance and weight loss in an intensive weight management clinic compared to standard dietetic care. *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics* 22; 72-76. For a copy of the report go to: <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/121638310/PDFSTART>

2. 313 patients took part in the study and patients under the intensive weight management clinic were seen once-a-month by the same dietitian, signed an agreement to attend the whole programme, were screened for readiness-to-

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change, and were required to maintain a diet diary. In the general dietary clinic, the length of time between appointments varied, and there was no guarantee that the same dietitian would attend all patient contact.

Of the 313 patients initially referred for weight reducing advice, one third did not book an appointment and more than half of those booked onto the intensive weight management sessions completed the course compared to less than one fifth of those attending general dietetic sessions. Weight loss for obese patients who attended at least five sessions of either clinic was similar (about 0.4 kilos per month), and suggests that for the well motivated and determined patient, the format of the clinic is of less importance than individual attitude.

3. Dr Mary Hickson is a registered dietitian at the Nutrition and Dietetic Research Group at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust. She is available for interview. The *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics* is the official journal of the British Dietetic Association. [www.wiley.com/bw/journal](http://www.wiley.com/bw/journal)

4. The British Dietetic Association founded in 1936 is the professional association for registered dietitians in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is the nations' largest organisation of food and nutrition professionals with nearly 6000 members. About two-thirds of members are employed in the National Health Service. The remaining members work in education, industry, research, sport settings or freelance.

5. Registered dietitians hold the only legally-recognisable graduate qualification in nutrition and dietetics. They are experts in interpreting and translating the science of nutrition into practical ways of promoting nutritional well-being, disease treatment and the risk reduction of nutrition-related problems. Their advice is sound and based on current scientific evidence. Registration, awarded by the Health Professions Council, is an indication that a dietitian is fit to practice, and is working within an agreed statement of conduct. For further details about the British Dietetic Association, please visit our website: [www.bda.uk.com](http://www.bda.uk.com).