

Online Search for Weight Loss Programs: Identifying Quality & Avoiding Fraud

A recent article from a major medical journal examined whether weight loss program descriptions available online offered enough detail to help physicians and consumers identify high-quality programs using evidence-based strategies within their community. Characteristics examined were those evaluated in the 2013 research update and consensus by The Obesity Society, American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology. **Since 2002, Dr. Christopher Case, endocrinologist, and Dr. Alan Rauba, internist/diabetologist, of Jefferson City Medical Group have offered a medically-supervised weight loss program in Jefferson City which would have earned a grade of HIGH quality in this study!**

The study examined programs by the following measures of quality: 1) a high-intensity (>14 sessions within 6 months) comprehensive lifestyle intervention; 2) a reduced calorie diet and/or meal replacement products; 3) increased physical activity; 4) use of behavioral modification strategies; and 5) any use of FDA non-approved supplements such as vitamins, minerals, herbals, botanicals, amino acids, enzymes, and hormones (hCG). Researchers reviewed websites and also contacted by phone nearly 200 community-based weight loss programs in an urban area. Only 1% of the programs were graded HIGH quality by all five criteria; 8% were graded MODERATE

quality if they avoided the use of FDA non-approved supplements and 91% were graded LOW quality if they DID use FDA non-approved supplements or met less than two of the five criteria.

JCMG's Weight Treatment Center offers a physician-supervised very-low-calorie-diet for clients with a BMI >30, some of whom are hoping to avoid weight loss surgery or to correct weight regain after surgery. A second option offered is a low-calorie diet for those who are ready to practice the food-based skills essential for long-term success. Weekly clinics and classes are conducted by a specially-trained staff of registered dietitians, licensed counselors and nurses. Similar support is offered during the maintenance phase, if desired. The center utilizes physical activity, behavior change strategies, and approved prescription medications but does NOT use any supplements which are non-approved by the FDA for weight loss.

In addition to the criteria used by the cited study, websites for the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) also offer consumer guidance and protection from weight loss fraud. Use the search term 'weight loss fraud' or search any treatment option or testing under consideration. The effort would protect one's physical health AND wallet!

Call JCMG's Weight Treatment Center at 556-5774 to register for a free information meeting.

Check out program details at

<http://www.jcmg.org/services/Weight-Treatment-Center>



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Bloom, B., Mehta, A. K., Clark, J. M. and Gudzone, K. A. (2016), Guideline-concordant weight-loss programs in an urban area are uncommon and difficult to identify through the internet. Obesity. doi: 10.1002/oby.21403

Jensen MD, Ryan DH, Apovian CM, et al. 2013 AHA/ACC/TOS Guideline for the Management of Overweight and Obesity in Adults: A Report of the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association Task Force on Practice Guidelines and The Obesity Society. J Am Coll Cardiol. 2014;63(25_PA):. doi:10.1016/j.jacc.2013.11.004.