

## H.E.A.L.T.H.: Efficacy of an Internet/Population-Based Behavioral Weight Management Program for the U.S. Army

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### Abstract

#### **Background:**

A significant number of soldiers exceed the maximum allowable weight standards or have body weights approaching the maximum allowable weight standards. This mandates development of scalable approaches to improve compliance with military weight standards.

#### **Methods:**

We developed an intervention that included two components: (1) an Internet-based weight management program (Web site) and (2) a promotion program designed to promote and sustain usage of the Web site. The Web site remained online for 37 months, with the Web site promotion program ending after 25 months.

#### **Results:**

Soldiers' demographics were as follows: mean age, 32 years; body mass index (BMI), 28 kg/m<sup>2</sup>; 31% female; and 58% Caucasian. Civilian demographics were as follows: mean age, 38 years; BMI, 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup>; 84% female; and 55% Caucasian. Results indicated that 2417 soldiers and 2147 civilians ( $N = 4564$ ) registered on the Web site. In the first 25 months (phase 1) of the study, new participants enrolled on the Web site at a rate of 88 (soldiers) and 80 (civilians) per month. After the promotion program was removed (phase 2), new participants enrolled at a rate of 18 (soldiers) and 13 (civilians) per month. Utilization of the Web site was associated with self-reported weight loss ( $p < .0001$ ). Participants who utilized the Web site more frequently lost more weight ( $p < .0001$ ). Participants reported satisfaction with the Web site.

#### **Conclusions:**

The Web site and accompanying promotion program, when implemented at a military base, received satisfactory ratings and benefited a subset of participants in promoting weight loss. This justifies further examination of effectiveness in a randomized trial setting.

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**Abbreviations:** (APFT) Army Physical Fitness Test, (AWCP) Army Weight Control Program, (BMI) body mass index, (H.E.A.L.T.H.) Healthy Eating, Activity, and Lifestyle Training Headquarters, (STW) screening table weight

**Keywords:** Army, Internet weight management, military, obesity, obesity prevention, weight loss

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