CORRESPONDENCE

Clinical Practice Guideline: The Prevention and Treatment of Obesity

by Prof. Dr. med. Alfred Wirth, Prof. Dr. med. Martin Wabitsch,
Prof. Dr. med. Hans Hauner in issue 42/2014

Telemedicine-Based Treatment

Given that obesity continues to be a pressing health problem, the “Prevention and Treatment of Obesity” guideline (1) prepared by Wirth, Wabitsch and Hauner is very commendable. Based on a literature search for the period 2005 to 2012, the guideline describes the possibilities and limitations of the conventional treatment approaches (dietary therapy, exercise therapy and bariatric surgery).

Unfortunately, the authors overlooked an innovative, telemedicine-based treatment supported by not only one but two controlled and randomized studies published between 2010 and 2012 (2, 3). Another extensive and controlled study about this method has been published this year (4). The Magdeburg University Hospital’s multimodal “Active Body Control” (ABC) program combines dual nutrition with continuous exercise monitoring and regular personalized online support (www.abcprogramm.de).

With weight reductions of 9 kg and 11.6 kg after 3 months and 12 months, respectively, the ABC program achieved significantly greater weight loss than the conventional methods discussed in the guideline (4–6 kg for dietary therapy; 2–3 kg for exercise therapy, and 5.5 kg for the multimodal M.O.B.L.I.S program). By leveraging new technologies, the time required by patients and their coaches is significantly reduced compared with other German programs, as are the drop-out rates (0 to 18%). In the meantime, three German health insurances have agreed to (in some cases significantly) subsidize participation in the ABC program.

Given these favorable and well published data, the ABC program should be adequately represented in the guideline, too.

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Conflict of interest statement

Prof. Luley has developed the ABC program at the Magdeburg University Hospital.

When Aipermon stopped the production of Aipermon activity sensors, Prof. Luley acquired the equipment inventory, distribution and support.

In Reply:

Prof. Luley rightly points out that telephone- and internet-based intervention programs are available for overweight and obese patients. Besides face-to-face programs, telemonitoring interventions represent another weight reduction option to support people living in rural areas, especially if they are younger.

The full version of the guideline (www.adipositas-gesellschaft.de) mentions Internet- and telephone-based weight loss programs, referring to two articles published in 2012. The guideline in *Deutsches Ärzteblatt* is—as stated there—a short version (1).

However, for several reasons, discussed in a recent systematic review of 7 randomized and controlled studies (2), Internet- and telephone-based programs are not recommended in the full version of the guideline either. The authors arrived at the conclusion that mobile technology-based programs can achieve good short-term and moderate mid-term results. Yet, the guideline requires long-term success (≥ 1 year). In addition, the authors noted deficits of the available studies with regard to clinical standards (diet, exercise), evidence of cost effectiveness and patient acceptance, and concluded that further studies in this field are needed.

The literature search for the guideline was completed in 2013. At that time, an analysis of 6-month data from the ABC program of 2011 was available; one-year data were published online in August 2014. The program was not mentioned in the guideline for the following reason: “At the time of printing of the guideline, 12-month evaluation data from Internet-based weight loss programs in Germany were not available.”

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Conflict of interest statement

Prof. Hauner has received consultancy fees from Weight Watchers International and Apothecon (advisory boards). He has received third-party funding from Weight Watchers International and from Riemser GmbH and Certmedica. He is a member of an international advisory board of NovoNordisk.

Prof. Wirth has received consultancy fees from Riemser GmbH.

Prof. Wabitsch has received consultancy fees from Johnson and Johnson MEDICAL GmbH.