

KEY MESSAGES

The Change Program: A pilot implementation trial of a general practitioner-delivered weight management program in primary care

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Policy context

Obesity is an important issue that is impacting on the health of all sectors of Australian society. Obesity puts a person at risk of developing chronic disease such as diabetes and heart disease. While it is well-known that losing as little as 5% of total body weight can improve people's current health, sense of well-being and risk for chronic disease, innovative and sustainable ways to assist people who are currently obese are needed.

General practitioners (GPs) are currently an under-utilised resource in assisting people who are overweight or obese. The Change Program is a GP-delivered weight management program for adult patients who are obese. A six-month pilot trial of The Change Program was recently completed, aiming to assess the feasibility and acceptability of a GP-delivered weight management program. The study followed 23 patients and 12 GPs over a six-month period and collected a broad range of data on their experience and outcomes from the program.

Key messages

- > By using The Change Program materials GPs are able to assist people to lose weight and also improve their overall health
- > The majority of patients found working with their GP an important motivator
- > The relationship between a patient and GP seems to be an important element in assisting long-term behaviour change
- > 34.7% of the participants lost 5% or more of their initial body weight at six months
- > GPs are able to manage other health problems during consultations which reduces fragmentation and healthcare cost
- > Some patients were able to affect the behaviour of their immediate family and friends, giving the program an even greater impact across the community
- > The positive results of the pilot study demonstrate that a large scale trial to assess overall effectiveness of The Change Program should be funded