Effect of a Culturally Adapted Behavioral Intervention for Latino Adults on Weight Loss Over 2 Years

It is estimated that up to 80% of Latino adults in the United States are living with overweight or obesity. Other chronic diseases and weight-related comorbidities are associated with obesity. Reducing obesity and overweight should therefore be a critical public health concern. One way to intervene in the Latino community to reduce levels of obesity are technology-mediated weight loss strategies. This two-year behavioural intervention used technology to reach a wide range of the Latino community. The culturally adapted programme branched from the Group Lifestyle Balance curriculum and was called Vida Sana. It was delivered in Spanish by a bilingual health coach. Intervention sessions were delivered in-person for one year, with the first six months using behavioural intervention sessions to achieve weekly or bi-weekly goals, and the second six months using once-monthly group support. In the second year, monthly emails were sent out on the previous year’s material as well as reminders to contact the health coach for support. Materials were provided to individuals participating in the intervention in Spanish, with English available on request. Feedback was taken through online applications in the participants’ preferred language.

The control group in the study were neither encouraged nor barred from outside weight loss programmes suggested by their primary care physician. All participants, both intervention and control, still received care from their primary care provider. Mean weight loss at 12 months was significantly greater for intervention participants, but at 24 months the difference in weight loss between the two groups was not statistically significant. Furthermore, there were no significant outcomes between the groups for waist circumference, leisure time physical activity, total energy expenditure, obesity related problem, and health related quality of life at 12 or 24 months. At 12 months, intervention session attendance was greatly positively correlated with weight loss. Technology can be implemented in the future to increase session attendance for obesity interventions. More research on behavioural lifestyle interventions for Latino individuals should be done for chronic disease prevention.