

Development of an Internet/Population-Based Weight Management Program for the U.S. Army

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Abstract

A significant number of Army soldiers are sufficiently overweight to exceed the maximum weight allowances defined by the Army weight control program (AR600-9). Also, the body weights of a substantial number of soldiers approach the maximum weight allowances. These soldiers should not gain additional weight if they are to meet Army weight allowances. The conventional approach to this overweight problem is assigning soldiers to remedial physical training and mandatory referral for nutrition counseling by a health care provider. An alternative to this conventional approach is to target the entire population of soldiers (population-based intervention) to promote weight loss in overweight soldiers and weight gain prevention in soldiers who are approaching overweight status. To accomplish this objective, the Healthy Eating, Activity, and Lifestyle Training Headquarters (H.E.A.L.T.H.) program was developed. This article describes the rationale for developing the program, the components of the program, and the utilization promotion strategies of the program. The H.E.A.L.T.H. program includes two primary components: (1) a Web site tailored to the standards established in Field Manual 21-20, Physical Fitness Training, Army physical fitness test, and AR600-9, the army weight control program, and (2) a health promotion program designed to promote awareness of the H.E.A.L.T.H. Web site and to facilitate use of the Web site by soldiers and their family members. The Web site is equipped with personalized planning tools and progress tracking over time related to fitness, caloric intake, and lifestyle behavior change goals. The health promotion program includes media advertisements and "ground roots" efforts to facilitate use by soldiers.

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Abbreviations: (APFT) Army physical fitness test, (AR) Army Regulation, (AWCP) Army weight control program, (BMI) body mass index, (DoD) Department of Defense, (DoDI) Department of Defense instruction

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