

## Pilot evaluation of an online weight management programme

S. Cawley<sup>1</sup>, S. Farrell<sup>1</sup>, D.G. Byrne<sup>2</sup>, M.J. Turner<sup>3</sup>, B. Clune<sup>4</sup> and D. McCartney<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Biological Sciences and Environmental Sustainability and Health Institute (ESHI), Dublin Institute of Technology, Kevin St., Dublin 8, Ireland, <sup>2</sup>GEMS Directorate, St. James's Hospital, James's St., Dublin 8, Ireland, <sup>3</sup>UCD Centre for Human Reproduction, Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital, Cork St., Dublin 8, Ireland and <sup>4</sup>DIT Student Health Centre, Dublin Institute of Technology, Aungier Street, Dublin 8, Ireland

While tools such as the Healthy Eating Index (HEI) and the Mediterranean Diet Score (MDS) have been designed to appraise dietary quality, all of these incorporate nutrient intake indices in their scoring systems, necessitating the use of nutrient analysis software<sup>(1)</sup>. The Dietary Assessment Tool (DAT) is a practical, food-based index for the assessment of dietary quality which also generates individualised dietary advice for users. This prospective pilot intervention study aimed to establish whether completion of a six-week on-line programme using the DAT was associated with significant weight loss and waist circumference reduction.

Students and staff of a third level institution ( $n = 183$ ) were recruited to the online weight management programme. *Eighty-five* respondents met the minimum inclusion criterion of logging on to the study website at least twice. *Thirty-one* participants completed the full six-week programme. All participants who completed the programme lost weight ( $n = 31$ ). Mean weight loss in males (4.2 kg) was greater than that in females (1.9 kg) ( $P = 0.004$ ).

**Table 1.** Changes in anthropometric status among those completing a six-week online weight loss programme ( $n = 31$ )

	<i>n</i>	Before		After		<i>P</i> -value	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Weight (kg ; mean (SD))	Males	18	94.9	7.2	90.7	7.2	<0.002
	Females	13	73.3	11.7	71.4	11.7	<0.001
	Overall	31	82.3	14.7	79.5	11.9	<0.001
Body mass index (kg/m <sup>2</sup> ; mean (SD))	Males	18	30.1	2.8	28.8	2.9	<0.001
	Females	13	26.6	3.6	26.0	3.8	0.001
	Overall	31	28.1	3.7	27.2	3.7	<0.001
Waist Circumference (cm; mean (SD))	Males	18	102.4	7.1	97.0	7.3	<0.001
	Females	13	86.7	9.0	83.5	9.8	<0.001
	Overall	31	93.3	11.3	89.2	10.8	<0.001
Waist-Height Ratio (mean (SD))	Males	18	0.57	0.04	0.54	0.04	<0.001
	Females	13	0.52	0.05	0.50	0.06	<0.001
	Overall	31	0.56	0.06	0.52	0.06	<0.001

Despite high attrition rates, completion of this six-week online weight loss programme was associated with decreases in weight and waist circumference, especially in men.

1. Waijers PM, Feskens EJ, Ocké MC (2007) *Br J Nutr* 97, 219–31.