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Health Education to Combat Obesity

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HEALTH EDUCATION TO COMBAT OBESITY

Context: Mexican morbidity has drastically changed towards chronic-degenerative diseases. Currently obesity affects 30% of the population. Taking advantage of available assets a student team implemented an obesity program in a small healthcare center.

Objectives:
- To create an accessible health education program to the community served.
- To decrease the weight of participants by 5%.
- Establish a comprehensive and lasting educational program.

Design: Random users of the health center were invited. Weekly sessions were imparted for a four-month period (August-December: phase 1, January-June: phase 2). Courses included essentials on nutrition, chronic degenerative diseases, self-esteem, and physical activity. Participants’ full medical history was performed and an individualized diet was designed. The second phase included a few participants from the first phase.

Main outcomes:
- First phase: 15 housewives (mean age: 44 years; mean BMI 32.07). Average decrease of 1.5% of their BMI (-2% of their initial weight in Kilograms).
- Second phase: 9 housewives, (mean age: 34 years; mean BMI 34.92) (G2) + 8 participants from the first phase (G1). Average decrease of 3.7% for G1 and 2.8% for G2 of their initial weight respectively.
- Annual outcomes: 8 patients were able to decrease 5% or more of their initial weight. 2 patients reached their normal BMI. 2 patients went from obesity stage II to obesity stage I.

CONCLUSIONS
A comprehensive and lasting educational program was created. Two satellites of this program were born. The community participated in the new integrants’ education. Many psychosocial problems were discovered behind the disguise of obesity. We expect this program will serve as an example for other health care centers, and to offer significative fruits in the future.

[Diagram of monthly weight variation in kilograms for GROUP 1 and GROUP 2]