



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **NEW STUDY IN THE LANCET: WEIGHT WATCHERS IS MORE EFFECTIVE THAN A BRIEF INTERVENTION AND SELF-HELP**

### **-WEIGHT LOSS SUSTAINED TWO YEARS DOWN THE LINE-**

**THURSDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2017, 08:59 AEST** - A new, two-year UK-based study published today in The Lancet shows that overweight and obese adults referred to Weight Watchers<sup>®</sup>, the world's leading community-based weight management provider, for one year, lost more than twice as much weight - and sustained the weight loss - in a two year period, than those who received a brief intervention and self-help materials.

The large independent study looked at weight loss among 1267 participants randomised to attend Weight Watchers for a 12-week or one year period, or to receive a brief intervention, alongside self-help materials and regular weigh-ins.

People assigned to the brief intervention were given a 32-page booklet of self-help weight management strategies with follow up weigh-ins at three, 12 and 24 months. Those assigned to Weight Watchers were asked to attend weekly meetings and had access to internet resources for the duration of their program, 12-weeks or one year, at no cost to themselves.

Participants assigned to one year of Weight Watchers lost, on average, more than twice as much weight as those in the brief intervention group<sup>1</sup>. They were also more likely to lose 5% and 10% or more of their initial weight, which are milestones that are associated with levels shown to have significant health benefits<sup>2</sup>. The superior weight losses in the one year Weight Watchers group were sustained even two years down the line.

The study also shows that Weight Watchers' one year program achieved improvements in important markers of risk for type 2 diabetes which were comparable to more intensive health professional-led interventions<sup>3</sup>. The data demonstrates how a referral to Weight Watchers can be successful on a large scale in helping those with excess weight achieve medically significant health benefits.

The evidence comes as the problems of obesity worldwide result in huge demands on medical services, with the disease taking over smoking as the leading cause of preventable death. The World

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<sup>1</sup> Mean weight change at 12 months was -3.26kg for brief intervention, -4.75kg in the 12-week program and -6.76kg in the 52-week program.

<sup>2</sup> At 12 and 24 months, participants in the 52-week program had greater reductions in waist and fat mass than participants in the 12-week program or brief intervention group. At 12 months, participants in the 52-week program had greater reductions in HbA<sub>1c</sub> than those in the 12-week program and brief intervention and greater reductions in fasting plasma glucose than those in the 12-week program and brief intervention.

<sup>3</sup> Reductions seen in the 52-week program participants at 12 months are larger than those seen at the same time point in the intensive lifestyle intervention arm of the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP), whose participants were similar to those in the current study in baseline BMI, HbA<sub>1c</sub> and glucose and had similar weight loss at 12 months, but achieved at a fraction of the cost. Notwithstanding gradual weight regain and increase in associated risk factors observed over 15 years follow-up, DPP achieved a 27% reduction in the cumulative incidence of diabetes in the lifestyle intervention relative to the control group

Health Organisation estimates that close to two billion people worldwide are currently overweight, with almost two out of three of the adult Australian population currently overweight or obese<sup>4</sup>, and 32 per cent obese and a further 35 per cent overweight in New Zealand<sup>5</sup>. Healthcare systems around the world whether public, private or combination are under pressure, and have a desire to respond to the obesity crisis.

Lead author Dr. Amy Ahern of the MRC Epidemiology Unit at the University of Cambridge says: “We’ve seen before that a 12-week program can help people lose weight, but for the first time we’ve shown that extending this to a full year leads to greater weight loss over a longer period and a lower risk of diabetes.”

Dr Michelle Celander, Director - Program & Content, Weight Watchers Australasia says: “Weight Watchers is committed to providing a healthy and sustainable weight-loss approach with proven efficacy. This study proves, once again, that Weight Watchers is a highly effective weight management program, and is part of the solution to help tackle the high and rising levels of overweight and obesity. It adds significant evidence and credibility for health professionals, and Weight Watchers, working together to improve the health of the nation in the short and long term.”

The study design was a randomised, prospective, controlled clinical trial, the gold standard in medical research. It was conducted by research teams led by Dr. Amy Ahern, at the University of Cambridge; Professor Jason Halford and Dr. Emma Boyland at the University of Liverpool, and Professor Susan Jebb and Professor Paul Aveyard at the University of Oxford, and involved 23 GP practices across the UK.

Weight Watchers is one of the few commercially available weight management programs that fulfil criteria developed by numerous expert panels. Weight Watchers is a proud member of the Weight Management Council of Australia Ltd. (WMC) and adheres to the WMC Code of Conduct that includes stringent requirements that meet the Australian National Clinical Practice Guidelines (NHMRC) for the treatment of overweight and obesity (NHMRC 2013) and address consumer protection<sup>6</sup>.

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### **Notes to Editors**

#### **About Weight Watchers International, Inc.**

Weight Watchers International, Inc. is one of the most recognised and trusted brand names among weight-conscious consumers. Weight Watchers provides commercial weight management services through a global network of Company-owned and franchise operations and offers innovative, digital weight management products through its websites, mobile sites and apps. These services and products are built on the Company's weight management program, which helps millions of people around the world lose weight through sensible

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<sup>4</sup> Global Obesity Centre, Deakin University, February 19th 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Health New Zealand, 2015-2016

<sup>6</sup> Weight Management Council Australia Ltd; [www.weightcouncil.org](http://www.weightcouncil.org)

and sustainable food plans, activity, behaviour modification and group support. Weight Watchers has an unparalleled network of service providers to assist members on their journey and also offers a wide range of products, publications and programs for those interested in weight loss and healthier living.

### **Funding**

The study was funded by the National Prevention Research Initiative (a consortium including government departments, research councils and major medical charities). Weight Watchers International funded the analysis of the blood samples taken as part of the study, as part of an MRC Industrial Collaboration Award. The intervention used was provided free to the NHS by Weight Watchers.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

ALA, SAJ, EJB, BRM and JCGH have received research funding to their institutions from Weight Watchers International and have given and received hospitality from providers of commercial weight loss services on a small number of occasions. PA and SAJ have conducted another publicly funded trial in which part of the intervention was delivered by and donated free by Slimming World and Rosemary Conley, and they are principal investigators on a trial funded through a grant to the University of Oxford from Cambridge Weight Plan. JCGH is Principal Investigator on studies funded through research grants to the University of Liverpool from the California Prune Board, Ingredion and American Beverage Association (ABA), and has studentships funded through BBSRC and ESRC with Unilever, Coca-Cola, and Tate & Lyle. JCGH provides expertise on health, weight management and appetite control to the food and beverage, commercial weight management, pharmaceutical and ingredient sectors.