School of Medicine clinic helps patients lose weight, gain healthy habits for a lifetime

A team of nutrition and wellness experts at the University of Nevada School of Medicine are leading the charge in a massive uphill battle against obesity. This team of specialists belongs to the Department of Internal Medicine’s Wellness and Weight Management Clinic, under the guidance of Doina Kulick, M.D.

“Obesity has become a serious health care issue in the last few decades as a result of the negative effects of our current environment including a sedentary lifestyle and over-consumption of readily available foods with high caloric density and large portions,” Kulick says.

The Wellness and Weight Management Clinic offers several weight loss programs to help individuals lower their risk factors for chronic diseases commonly associated with obesity such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer.

School of Medicine weight management clinicians achieve these results by focusing on lifestyle improvements using diet and exercise that empower people to use skills to take charge of their weight and health goals simultaneously. The clinic offers several programs designed to meet the individual needs of clients, whether it is one-time nutrition counseling, weekly individual coaching sessions or intensive group weight-loss classes.

“Patients often don’t realize the dramatic health improvements they can achieve with positive lifestyle changes, such as eating healthier and becoming more physically active,” Kulick says. “Patients who successfully lose weight in our programs reduce, and, sometimes completely eliminate medications for chronic diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure.”

The experienced multidisciplinary medical team at the clinic includes board certified physician experts in nutrition, specially trained registered dietitians in weight management and a registered clinical exercise physiologist.

“We are not your ‘one-size-fits-all’ weight loss center. We have highly trained staff and we utilize the latest technology available,” Kulick says. “We evaluate a patient as an individual. We thoroughly and scientifically assess a patient’s unique body composition and resting metabolic rate to individualize a precise nutrition and physical activity prescription that is guaranteed to induce weight loss.”

Resting metabolic rate measures the number of calories an individual uses each day to maintain his or her body at rest.

“Having the ability to measure resting metabolic rate defines how fast the body’s engine is running,” Kulick says. “This allows our health care team to individualize weight loss treatment based on a patient’s specific energy needs.”

According to Mary Sanders, a registered clinical exercise physiologist at the Wellness and Weight Management Clinic, physical activity and exercise prescriptions are also individually tailored, based on pre-program lifestyle and mobility assessments.

“We focus on the activities that clients want to be better at doing, making it relevant to their daily lives” Sanders says. “With the client, we design a structured ‘fit it in’ approach that follows the guidelines of the American College of Sports Medicine to meet goals.”

Sanders adds: “Our clinical research revealed that after 12 weeks, our clients increased their lower body muscle power by 27 percent and increased upper body muscle power by 18 percent. Clients reported that daily activities were easier to perform—they had more energy, less stress and felt greater confidence in being able to expand activities.”

The School of Medicine’s Wellness and Weight Management Clinic is the only facility in Nevada to offer Health Management Resources (HMR) which is a highly effective program for treating obesity.
meal replacement weight loss program. HMR is a leading provider of medically-based weight management programs in clinics, hospitals and major medical centers throughout the country.

The HMR program focuses on defined behaviors that impact weight loss and weight loss maintenance, such as increased physical activity, increased vegetable and fruit intake and the use of portion-controlled, low-calorie meal replacement.

“Patients who are enrolled in our HMR program for approximately one year achieve an average weight loss of 57 pounds, or 21.7 percent loss of their starting body weight,” says Maureen Molini, registered dietitian and coordinator of the HMR Program.

These one-year results rival the average weight loss achieved with laparoscopic gastric banding surgery, but without any of the associated health risks or expense.

The ever-worsening rise of obesity in the U.S. only reiterates that keeping excess weight off for long periods of time or permanently is harder than simply losing the weight. Nonetheless, many Americans can, and do, achieve significant weight loss success with lifestyle changes.

Results revealed by research conducted with the National Weight Control Registry, an organization established in 1994 by a group of researchers studying the effect of lifestyle on the treatment of overweight and obesity, has interviewed more than 10,000 adults who lost 30 pounds or more and maintained their losses for at least one year by changing their lifestyles.

The researchers found that National Weight Control Registry participants had in common:

- Lost about 70 pounds and kept it off for an average of six years.
- Modified permanently their diets in some way (decreasing portion size, eating more fruits and vegetables and avoiding fatty, calorie rich foods).
- Exercised 60 minutes per day, with walking being the most common form of exercise.
- Ate four-to-five times a day controlled-size portions to keep hunger at bay.
- Ate breakfast every day.
- Weighed themselves at least once a week.
- Watched fewer than 10 hours of TV per week (a third of the average weekly American viewing time).

The Wellness and Weight Management Clinic accepts many different insurance plans and self-pay patients. State of Nevada employees can use their insurance coverage to pay for program fees. To learn more, please call the clinic at (775) 784-4474.

“I turned 40 in January of 2011, and after a physical, I couldn’t lie to myself anymore. My health was starting to deteriorate; I was not in a good place physically, mentally or emotionally. I knew I had to lose weight. My doctor referred me to the HMR program at the University of Nevada School of Medicine. With the help of the health educators, I was able to hit my goal in nine months. I no longer have high blood pressure, sleep apnea, gout, diabetes, or elevated liver enzymes. Through the HMR Program, not only did I lose the weight, I gained confidence, happiness and an all-around better feeling about myself.”

– HMR patient “Matt,” who dropped 162 pounds, reduced his waist circumference by 18 inches, lowered his body fat by 20.3 percent and reduced his blood pressure from 151/82 to 1 19/76.