
POSTER ABSTRACT**“Light through Life”– an inter-disciplinary long-term integrated health promotion programme for overweight and obese people**

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Introduction/Background: In 2019, around half of the Austrian adult population was overweight or obese, and this has only worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. While research is clear that sustainable weight loss needs a long-term and holistic approach to support lifestyle changes and address the underlying causes of overweight and obesity, most weight loss programmes offer only short-term and single intervention solutions, with a focus on either raising physical activity or changing nutritional habits. To raise the potential for success and translate research into practice, the Austrian Social Insurance Fund for Public Service, Railway and Mining Industries developed “Light through Life”, a long-term integrated health promotion programme, which started in January 2022.

Who is it for? The programme was developed by an interdisciplinary team of the social insurance fund and is offered to their adult insurees, who are overweight or obese. They can register themselves, be transferred by their GP or continue after other health promotion and rehabilitation programmes offered by the social insurance fund. The programme itself consists of three phases, which are designed to progressively enable participants to not only manage their weight, but self-sufficiently design their own healthy lifestyle. Regular monitoring, participant feedback and an independent evaluation ensure that a continuous improvement process takes into account the needs of the participants and adjust the programme accordingly.

What did you do? “Light through Life” aims to strengthen health literacy and self-management skills of the participants by focussing on four themes: clinical aspects, physical activity, nutrition, and mental health. In addition they receive ongoing support through prevention coordinators. The first phase is a 6-months intensive basic programme, which combines face to face lectures with practical classes covering the four topics. The focus is on creating an understanding of what influences their health and thus their weight and how to manage it differently. The participants learn in groups to create a community of practice. The programme encourages participants to set their own goals and monitor them. In the second phase, the year-long “Pro” programme the support offered changes to coaching and more person-focussed training. In this phase, participants should be able to manage themselves, with thematic workshops and trainings reinforcing the learned content or addressing specific needs. Participation throughout the programme is voluntary.

What results did you get? What impact did you have? The programme was introduced with an independent evaluation in place. The evaluation uses a mixed methods approach, analysing both process and outcome measures for participants and professionals. The comprehensive

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quantitative data collected through regular clinical examinations and an extensive lifestyle questionnaire will enable a better understanding of which elements work and which need improvement. A first, preliminary analysis of the baseline data and after 6 months shows weight and waist circumference reductions in all groups save obese men (above BMI of 36). More detailed analyses also including mental health and e.g. the urban-rural divide will be available for the conference.

With a comprehensive analysis of the first year of the programme, recommendations will be formulated.

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