

TELEPHONE COUNSELING TO PROMOTE WEIGHT REDUCTION AND BLOOD PRESSURE CONTROL IN HYPERTENSIVE WOMEN

Janet Fluker, MSN, APRN, PhD Candidate, Medical College of Georgia
Nurse Practitioner, Internal Medicine, Horizon's Diagnostics Incorporated
1900 10th Avenue, Suite 211, Columbus, GA 31901

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Background/Rationale: Excessive weight and high blood pressure place women at risk for adverse health outcomes. Although nurse practitioners in primary care are ideally suited to intervene with women at risk, busy clinic schedules may not provide for an adequate “dose” of counseling and education to effect the necessary lifestyle modifications. Telephone counseling in addition to regular office/clinic visits is an approach to promoting lifestyle modification worthy of investigation.

Purpose: To discuss methodological and ethical issues particular to telephone counseling research to assist women with lifestyle changes that promote weight reduction and blood pressure control.

Previous Studies: There have been an increasing number of telephone intervention studies targeting lifestyle modifications including smoking, diet, and physical activity. Randomized controlled trials of lifestyle intervention for lowering weight and blood pressure are few but have demonstrated effectiveness. There has been even less experimental research using telephone counseling as the primary means to promote lifestyle modification aimed at reducing weight and blood pressure.

Special Issues With This Population: Challenges in addressing excessive weight and hypertension among women in the primary care setting include: implementing effective lifestyle modification strategies, time required for counseling, and appropriate educational material.

Methods Used In This Study: This is a clinical trial (N=60) with repeated measures of weight, blood pressure, and self-efficacy. Women who are overweight and hypertensive are randomized to either the experimental or usual care condition. The self-regulation intervention delivered by phone over five sessions involves the use of seven self-regulation strategies targeting lifestyle modifications in the areas of diet and physical activity. The feasibility study (N=6) results supported the potential of the intervention for promoting weight loss.

Challenges Associated With The Telephone Intervention Method: Problems encountered involve participants not being at home at the time of a scheduled counseling session, and interruptions and distractions during the counseling sessions. Ethical concerns regarding telephone counseling and strategies to address them in this population will be discussed.