

A gender-sensitised weight loss and healthy living programme for overweight and obese men delivered by Scottish Premier League football clubs (FFIT): a pragmatic randomised controlled trial

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www.thelancet.com Published online January 21, 2014 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(13\)62420-4](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(13)62420-4).

Summary □ **Background** The prevalence of male obesity is increasing but few men take part in weight loss programmes. We assessed the effect of a weight loss and healthy living programme on weight loss in football (soccer) fans.

Methods We did a two-group, pragmatic, randomised controlled trial of 747 male football fans aged 35–65 years with a body-mass index (BMI) of 28 kg/m² or higher from 13 Scottish professional football clubs. Participants were randomly assigned with SAS (version 9.2, block size 2–9) in a 1:1 ratio, stratified by club, to a weight loss programme delivered by community coaching staff in 12 sessions held every week. The intervention group started a weight loss programme within 3 weeks, and the comparison group were put on a 12 month waiting list. All participants received a weight management booklet. Primary outcome was mean difference in weight loss between groups at 12 months, expressed as absolute weight and a percentage of their baseline weight. Primary outcome assessment was masked. Analyses were based on intention to treat. The trial is registered with Current Controlled Trials, number ISRCTN32677491.

Findings 374 men were allocated to the intervention group and 374 to the comparison group. 333 (89%) of the intervention group and 355 (95%) of the comparison group completed 12 month assessments. At 12 months the mean difference in weight loss between groups, adjusted for baseline weight and club, was 4.94 kg (95% CI 3.95–5.94) and percentage weight loss, similarly adjusted, was 4.36% (3.64–5.08), both in favour of the intervention ($p < 0.0001$). Eight serious adverse events were reported, five in the intervention group (lost consciousness due to drugs for pre-existing angina, gallbladder removal, hospital admission with suspected heart attack, ruptured gut, and ruptured Achilles tendon) and three in the comparison group (transient ischaemic attack, and two deaths). Of these, two adverse events were reported as related to participation in the programme (gallbladder removal and ruptured Achilles tendon).

Interpretation The FFIT programme can help a large proportion of men to lose a clinically important amount of weight; it offers one effective strategy to challenge male obesity.

Funding Scottish Government and The UK Football Pools funded delivery of the programme through a grant to the Scottish Premier League Trust. The National Institute for Health Research Public Health Research Programme funded the assessment (09/3010/06).