



Tackling the growing obesity epidemic

New research shows Weight Watchers® works globally

Stockholm, 12 July 2010: New research unveiled at the [International Congress on Obesity](#) (ICO) is further evidence of how Weight Watchers helps people around the world lose weight effectively, and has the potential to collaborate further with public health care providers worldwide to help reverse the obesity epidemic.

“New research in countries as diverse as China, Spain, Australia, Germany and the UK shows Weight Watchers proven method works consistently – not only in the US as several previous studies have confirmed – but also across different cultures to deliver significant weight loss. We are proud of our efforts to tackle the epidemic and contribution to obesity science. We have published 61 original scientific publications underpinning the effectiveness of our approach making Weight Watchers unique among commercial weight loss services”, said **David Kirchhoff, President & CEO, Weight Watchers International Inc.**

Kirchhoff and executives from Weight Watchers, the world’s leading provider of weight loss services, join 3,000 scientists, policymakers and health professionals attending ICO in Stockholm 11-15 July.

Susan Jebb, Head of Nutrition & Health Research, Medical Research Council in the UK, who headed up the landmark global efficacy research project, released today, outlined first results showing that 61% of programme completers achieved weight loss of = 5% of initial weight compared to 32% with standard care delivered through primary care. Jebb said that, *“The research shows that participation in Weight Watchers leads to medically-significant weight loss”.*

Jebb added, *“ICO is the leading conference for specialist obesity researchers and practitioners. Finding effective solutions is a key theme of this year’s meeting, reflecting the global obesity crisis and its adverse impact on individuals and health care systems around the world”.* Kirchhoff said *“a variety of options are needed to tackle the epidemic by matching the diverse needs of individuals with evidence based solutions such as surgery, medical devices, medication, and lifestyle modification. This research shows Weight Watchers is one of the most effective lifestyle modification interventions out there.”*

Without implementing cost-effective solutions now, the obesity epidemic stands to worsen according to the World Health Organization, which predicts 2.3 billion people will be overweight by 2015 and more than 700 million obese. Medical costs for an obese person are 42% higher than for a person of normal weight in the US. In the EU, obesity accounts for up to 7% of healthcare costs. This as health systems around the world are under growing pressure to respond with increasingly limited resources.

Melanie Stubbing, President, International of Weight Watchers International Inc., also attending ICO, observed, *“Where public health care providers can also provide effective solutions they have intrinsic limitations in terms of time and resources, Weight Watchers is already equipped to support them by delivering effective services at convenient times and locations in accordance with local cultures. Weight Watchers is an effective, affordable and scalable weight management option to complement services provided by overstretched health systems”*.

Independent economic analysisⁱ from the UK provides insight into the potential cost effectiveness of Weight Watchers. If just 10% of the English population participated in a short term weight management intervention from Weight Watchers, future full economic cost savings could reach £6.4 billion.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Weight Watchers International, Inc. is the world’s leading provider of weight management services, operating globally through a network of Company-owned and franchise operations. Weight Watchers holds almost 50,000 meetings each week where members receive group support and learn about healthy eating patterns, behaviour modification and physical activity. WeightWatchers.com provides innovative, subscription weight management products over the Internet and is the leading Internet-based weight management provider in the world. In addition, Weight Watchers offers a wide range of products, publications and programs for those interested in healthy weight loss and weight control.

ABSTRACTS REFERENCED

Referral to a commercial weight management programme enhances weight loss achieved in primary care **T3:PO.60**

Other abstracts presented at ICO:

Early Results of a Commercial Weight-loss Service in China **T4:PO.355**

An Audit of the UK Weight Watchers NHS Referral Scheme **T3:PO.64**

Outcomes of providing a scalable weight-loss service in Spain **T3:PO.88**

Changes in cardiovascular risk factors with participation in a 12-week weight loss trial using a commercial format **T3:PO.72**

ⁱ Brown, M and McPherson, K (2009) Computer modelling the health and economic outcomes of the Weight Watchers GP referral scheme, *Obesity Facts*; 2 (Suppl. 2) 115