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Study Shows Lifestyle Changes Have Major Health Impact:
Health Resolutions CAN Work With Right Strategy

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New Year's resolutions to lose weight, stop smoking and exercise are made by countless people every January. Unfortunately, these goals seldom seem attainable and good intentions often fall by the wayside after a few weeks. Is there really a way to keep your resolutions and transform your body and your health?

The results of a two-year study involving the Department of Human Services (7,500 employees) of the State of Oklahoma conclude the answer is "yes". A lifestyle management program using step-by-step attainable goals was shown to successfully translate good intentions to live a healthier lifestyle into reality.

The study participants were enrolled in INTERVENT USA, a scientifically-based lifestyle management program (offered in the Atlanta area through the Emory Heart Center). Individualized programs to help them implement and adhere to exercise, nutrition, weight management, stress management, and smoking cessation resolutions were implemented and administered via the telephone and the Internet. Not only did many of the participants in the program, named OK Health, reach their goals but, the health claim costs of the employees who completed one year of program participation were lowered by a staggering 31 percent, according to the Oklahoma Employees Benefits Council and Oklahoma Department of Human Services.

"In employees with abnormal risk factor values at the start of the study, one year of program participation resulted in impressive improvements in blood pressure and cholesterol levels, with increases in HDL ('good' cholesterol) and decreases in the 'bad' lipids (LDL cholesterol and triglycerides). In addition, on average, there was a weight loss of 11 pounds and a significant reduction of fasting blood glucose levels," says Neil F. Gordon, MD, PhD, Clinical Professor of Medicine at Emory University and INTERVENT USA founder. "After two years, participants in the program experienced even greater benefits with an average cholesterol reduction of 42 mg/dl and weight loss of 19 pounds. Those figures translate into over a 22 percent reduction in the risk of having a heart attack in the next ten years."

These findings are particularly dramatic because Oklahoma has one of the highest death rates in the U.S. from cardiovascular disease caused by smoking and obesity. "Oklahomans usually die 2 1/2 years earlier than their national counterparts," says Terry Cline, Oklahoma state Secretary of Health.

How can the success of the OK Health participants help the rest of us keep our New Year's Resolutions? "We have shown that you can keep lifestyle goals and make substantial changes in your weight and, more importantly, overall health. Setting goals is a habit of successful people and a critical part of the INTERVENT USA program and New Year is an especially good time to set personal goals or resolutions," says Dr. Gordon. "Be sure to set realistic goals - many people set themselves up for disappointment because they set a goal that is unrealistic. Our research shows that even small lifestyle changes can be very beneficial. I would rather see a person make a small change they can stick with, than a very large change in their lifestyle that is unrealistic and/or not sustainable. A key to success is to make lifestyle changes one step at a time. And, if you need help, an individualized lifestyle management program that offers you science-based support can help you keep your resolutions."

Based upon the impressive results of the pilot study, Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry has announced the OK Health lifestyle management program will be expanded to all active State of Oklahoma employees in January 2006 . The program will use the systems, methods and materials developed by INTERVENT USA and proven effective in more than 70 published research studies conducted in the US and Canada by INTERVENT USA and its over 60 healthcare system licensees.