

An internet solution for families at risk for obesity and diabetes: Online intervention and curriculum to train healthcare workers developed by Mount Sinai Medical Center and Columbia University

Helaine Ciporen
Mount Sinai Medical Center, USA

A unique partnership between Mount Sinai Medical Center's Pediatric Diabetes Department, Columbia School of Social Work and the Columbia Center for New Media Teaching and Learning has resulted in 'diaBeaters!', a multi-session, interactive, online program to help mothers and caregivers establish the lifestyle changes needed for the prevention and management of obesity and type 2 diabetes in their children and families. The internet capabilities of this program holds the promise of cost effective distribution, usage and training capabilities for professional and community health workers via webinar conferencing. The patient-centered, interactive approach of the intervention makes it adaptable to the needs of various cultures and resources.

Launched in 2010, 'diaBeaters!' Prompts families to reflect on their current behaviors, assess their needs and resources, and develop customized plans to meet their unique needs. Following the CDC's evidence based recommendation for multisession healthcare counseling, this program adds motivational counseling interventions to overcome psychosocial barriers and progress through the hierarchy of stages of change, including relapse. Through interactive games and activities, 'diaBeaters!' enhances a family's engagement in health education, promotes their investment in creating and implementing self-made plans, strengthens their development of problem solving skills and builds self efficacy. 'diaBeaters!' has a built-in capacity to train new and existing healthcare workers through webinar education and provide ongoing support with its detailed curriculum guide. At Columbia University, students in the advanced clinical practices social work courses use 'diaBeaters!' effectively to both learn about diabetes and analyze various clinical skills to enhance their practice. The teaching guide provided for every page of the intervention educates and supports the practitioner. To quote one student, "I think my biggest take-away from the diaBeaters! Intervention is seeing how closely connected these elements of health, social work, and psychosocial work are."

The process of developing 'diaBeaters!' reflects a contemporary shift towards meaningful collaboration among researchers, direct service providers, and communities to be targeted for intervention.

helaine.ciporen@mountsinai.org