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Why Should You Refer a Patient to OA?

*by Dr. Channing
Finkbeiner MD*

I want to tell you about one of my patients who is making a life change. I have experienced how Twelve-Step programs work for the alcoholic, but this is my first experience seeing the results of Overeaters Anonymous (OA). OA is a Twelve-Step program patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous. OA has demonstrated to me a remarkable change in this individual.

I met this patient eight years ago and became aware of his participation in OA. I have witnessed more than a 125-pound (57-kg) weight loss in him

and tremendous changes in his personal life.

My patient has faced personal challenges: not only in career changes, but also in every aspect of his life. He has had multiple job changes and even episodes of temporary unemployment. Yet he continued to work the OA program through all of life's challenges.

Serenity is the most salient character and personality trait I have witnessed in him as a direct result of his participation in OA's Twelve-Step program. The serenity my patient has expressed has altered my practice.

I know that OA's Twelve-Step program is



valid and appropriate for those who would like to address weight-loss issues. I recommend this program to my patients, and I wish more of my patients would follow OA's program of recovery.

The Only Program With Long-Term Success



by E.S.G., RN, MSN

I am facing the truth about myself and my disease of compulsive overeating. I am a Masters-prepared registered nurse. Most of my life, I have

struggled with my weight. I remember being on a diet in elementary school and attending a weigh-in weight-loss program in eighth grade.

As a registered nurse, I received education in the nutritional needs of individuals with specific disease processes. I also learned many interesting nutritional facts. Despite this knowledge, I could not maintain a healthy body weight. I tried several different diet

plans; some were more successful than others. The weight would come off and then return, and I was always gaining more weight than I had lost. Before I walked through the doors of Overeaters Anonymous (OA), I weighed over 406 pounds (184 kg).

I discovered OA over seven years ago. I have been abstinent from compulsive eating for six and a half years. The OA

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A Doctor Finds a Solution in OA

by K.D., MD, Chicago,
Illinois USA

I am a doctor and a grateful, recovering compulsive overeater and anorexic-bulimic.

I crawled in to Overeaters Anonymous early in 2000. I had been bingeing and purging from five to 15 times a day, every day, for several years. No amount of self-knowledge or willpower had arrested my eating disorders, nor had the knowledge acquired during my medical training.

At the suggestion of a loving therapist, and after much resistance on my part to “a place like that,” I made it to my first OA meeting. Though I had seen several therapists in the past, this one had been sober many years in Alcoholics Anonymous, and he was the first to tell me about OA. Before his recommendation, I didn’t know that anything like OA existed, even though I was a fourth-year medical student at the time.

Since April 11, 2001,

one day at a time, I have not found it necessary to binge and purge or starve myself. This I attribute to discovering a loving Higher Power, an outcome of working the Twelve Steps of OA (based on AA’s Twelve-Step recovery program) to the best of my ability, in all my affairs.

I could not do this alone. I needed the unconditional love, acceptance, guidance and support of other compulsive overeaters working the same Steps in the Fellowship of OA. Here I found intelligent people who understood my shame and pride and my devastating powerlessness over food—people in all sorts of careers, colors, shapes, sizes and other differences. Here I found people who understood my behavior because they lived it. They suffered physically, emotionally and spiritually under the bondage of food, just as I did. They had been where I was, but some of them were no longer there.

Complementing the Professional Community With Overeaters Anonymous

Many professional organizations and institutions work with OA members to inform other professionals and the public about compulsive eating and the resources available in OA to address this problem.

OA is not in competition with the professional community. On the contrary, many members consider OA to be a complement to the professional services they receive.

In part, OA works because it offers an ongoing support system for members and encourages them to help one another, thereby weaken-

ing their isolation and loneliness. OA members provide this support through sharing their experience, strength and hope with one another. OA claims no medical, nutritional or psychological expertise. It suggests that interested members contact qualified professionals for help in these areas.



They were on a new and more satisfying plane of living and told me I was free to join them, provided I was willing to follow a few simple principles. In OA, I found a solution to the eating disorders I had been battling with little success for much of my life.

Many doctors recommend Alcoholics Anonymous to their patients

who are drinking themselves to death. Unfortunately, fewer doctors recommend OA to their patients who are eating themselves to death. My hope is that this newsletter encourages health-care professionals to recommend Overeaters Anonymous to their patients who suffer from the many-faced disease of compulsive overeating.

I Heartily Recommend OA

by Anonymous

I would like to recommend Overeaters Anonymous to the professional community. OA offers a multi-faceted way of life without the harmful consequences of excess body weight. As a dentist and OA member, I know all weight-loss methods work, but they usually produce short-term successes followed by demoralizing failure. OA’s Twelve-Step program for compulsive overeaters, chronic dieters, bulimics and anorexics opens the door for long-term weight maintenance. OA has no dues, fees or startup costs, and the cost to the health-care system is zero.

In 2003 I entered OA

at 247 pounds (112 kg). One year later I had lost 100 pounds (45 kg). My weight remains stable. Adherence to my food plan is now a healthy habit. In 2008 I relocated to a remote Alaskan town with no OA meetings. Now we have one. OA is transportable.

When my dental patients mention a desire to improve their overall health, I make my OA membership known. I often bring OA information to health-care professionals at the hospital with which I am affiliated.

I heartily recommend OA. If you see patients who can’t attain a healthy body size, suggest OA. The results may surprise you.

Members Praise Professionals

by Louise M., RN, MSN

I am a nurse and a member of OA.

My friends would ask me about nutrition, and I have taught nutrition classes, but I could not stop eating. My doctor said my cholesterol, triglycerides and weight were way over a healthy level, but the doctor never gave me helpful suggestions on what to do about it. Diets had succeeded in the past, but the goal always was to lose weight so I could eat “normally” again. This time I could not stick to a diet even long enough to lose the weight.

Then I learned about OA. In OA I discovered some people have allergies to certain trigger foods. One bite is too many and a thousand are not enough. Once we eat one of our trigger foods, we cannot stop. And once we eat something not on our food plan, the food plan becomes useless because we are eating out of control.

In OA I heard about people who accepted they could never have another piece of cake or ice cream or nuts. I heard people talk about weighing and measuring their food. I now carry a small scale with me and weigh and measure my food when I am eating out. Some people in OA do not have to go to that extreme. Many commit their food for the day and call someone if they change their plan.

Many OA members praise a professional (their therapist, doctor or nutritionist) every time they share the story of how

they got into OA. We have the trust of our patients and clients. They need something that will work for them and give them support to eat healthy food in healthy amounts.

These clients can try OA. It is free, with no commitment or obligation. If they don't like it, they can get a refund of their misery, as one OA member always says.

Even people who have tried OA before sometimes get relief when they come back and try again. Maybe they weren't ready, or maybe they weren't desperate enough. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop eating compulsively. This means that overeaters, anorexics and bulimics are equally welcome.

It is a great Fellowship. Through menopause and the death of my mother, it helped me maintain my weight loss. It can help you and those who come to you for help. Thank you for caring.

Pamphlets for Professionals

The World Service Office (WSO) of Overeaters Anonymous carries pamphlets for health-care professionals. Call the WSO; you may also order these and find other pamphlet titles online at bookstore.oa.org.

Introducing OA to Health-Care Professionals—

Explains how OA complements professional care. Includes a questionnaire for clients and patients about eating behaviors. (#753K/\$.15 each)

Is Food a Problem for You?—Includes 15 questions to determine if someone is a compulsive eater, a description of the OA program, member testimonials and the Twelve Steps. (#750/\$.20 each)

Fifteen Questions—Helps your client decide if he or she is a compulsive overeater. (#755K/\$.10 each)

US Shipping: \$5 for orders up to \$24.99; 20% for orders \$25 to \$59.99; 17% for orders \$60 to \$99.99; 12% for orders above \$100. Call the WSO for expedited orders and shipping outside the US.

Preamble

Overeaters Anonymous is a Fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength and hope, are recovering from compulsive overeating. We welcome everyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. There are no dues or fees for members; we are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting nor accepting outside donations. OA is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology or religious doctrine; we take no position on outside issues. Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive overeating and to carry this message of recovery to those who still suffer.

The Only Program With Long-Term Success

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program has addressed my physical maladies; I have lost

150 pounds (68 kg). But the healing aspects of this program focus on emotional and spiritual recovery. My weight gain was not so much related to the food I ate as to its association with the reasons I compulsively overate.

Many different stresses lead me to food for comfort. Although my disease is spiritual in nature, OA addresses the physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of the disease of

compulsive eating. The program illuminates the error of my ways.

I had tried to fix my life by decreasing my food intake. What I found in OA was that as I fix my life through this simple Twelve-Step program, my food intake decreases and the weight comes off. I recommend this straightforward program to everyone who asks me how I lost 150 pounds (68 kg). Others are finding the miracle I have found.

Please recommend this program to your clients. It is the only program where I have found long-term success.



To hear firsthand the recovery attained by members in Overeaters Anonymous, listen to podcasts on the OA Web site at www.oa.org/podcast/. Podcasts in English, Spanish and French explore remarkable recoveries with individual members. Hear a recap of an OA meeting and readings from OA pamphlets.

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12 STEPS

Twelve Steps

- to freedom from yo-yo dieting
- to peer understanding
- to renewed self-esteem
- to freedom from compulsion
- to a healthier body
- to a new attitude toward life



www.oa.org



Together We Can