

MEDIA RELEASE**Study shows HCF weight-loss program improves quality of life for osteoarthritis sufferers**

Sydney, 27 July, 2015 – A study supported by HCF, Australia’s largest non-profit private health insurer, has confirmed the benefit of weight loss in relieving the symptoms of knee osteoarthritis and improving the quality of life of its sufferers.

Symptomatic knee osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common cause of limited mobility and diminished quality of life among Australians and obesity is a key trigger for developing severe OA.

The study involved 1,000 HCF member participants in the HCF-funded Osteoarthritis Healthy Weight for Life program, a structured 18-week knee and hip arthritis disease management program focused on weight loss and delivered remotely to eligible HCF members. It was part of a larger study into 2,169 osteoarthritis sufferers that was presented at the 2015 World Congress on Osteoarthritis held in Seattle in May.

The collaborative study - conducted by experts from the Institute of Bone and Joint Research at the University of Sydney, the Centre for Health Exercise and Sports Medicine at the University of Melbourne, the Rheumatology Department at Sydney’s Royal North Shore Hospital and chronic disease management specialist Prima Health Solutions - sought to measure the effects of the HCF program.

Researchers designed an instrument to measure the general health status of HCF participating members across a range of categories including: physical functioning, role functioning physical, bodily pain, general health, vitality, social functioning, role functioning emotional, and mental health.

The study revealed 9 in 10 participants recorded a reduction in body weight of more than 2.5%.

Dr Andrew Cottrill, HCF Medical Director and one of the principal coordinators of the study, said that while there was currently no cure for OA, the study drew a clear link between addressing the common cause, obesity, and improving quality of life for sufferers.

“There was a direct correlation between greater weight loss and improvement in broader health outcomes for participants. The higher the weight loss over the period of the program the more improvement shown in all eight quality-of-life measures,” he said.

“Involvement in this kind of study demonstrates HCF’s commitment to research and uncovering improved, proactive treatment options for chronic illness affecting millions of Australians. It’s hoped programs such as HCF’s Healthy Weight for Life will deliver health benefits to members and, in the case of osteoarthritis sufferers, help prevent avoidable and painful operations in the future.”

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Issued on behalf of HCF by Sefiani Communications Group. Media inquiries to Karen Dunicliff on ph. (02) 8920 0700, mob. 0435 807 761 or kdunicliff@sefiani.com.au.

About HCF

HCF is Australia’s largest non-profit health insurer, currently covering more than 1.5 million Australians. To learn more about HCF go to <http://www.hcf.com.au/about-us>