# AI in Obesity Treatment: Human Coaches Remain Essential for Success, Study Shows



### AI in Obesity Treatment: Human Coaches Still Crucial, Study Finds

A recent study from Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in the United States revealed that current technology alone is not sufficient to replace human coaches in obesity treatment. The research, led by Professor Bonnie Spring, found that individuals who only used technology for weight loss support—such as the Wireless Feedback System (WFS), which includes an app, Wi-Fi scale, and Fitbit—were less likely to achieve clinically meaningful weight loss compared to those who had the addition of a human coach.

The study involved 400 adults aged 18 to 60 with obesity. Participants were randomly assigned to either receive weight loss treatment using only the WFS or a combination of WFS and remote coaching. Results indicated that the latter group saw better outcomes. Despite advancements in technology, the need for human interaction remains critical in achieving significant weight loss goals.

Prof Spring noted that while an AI chatbot might eventually replace human coaches, the current tech is not advanced enough to do so effectively.

Separately, a weight loss program in the UK called "Game of Stones" is being trialed, providing daily text message tips and cash incentives to help obese men lose weight. The scheme has shown promise and is expected to expand to women. Researchers argue that this approach is cost-effective for the NHS, given the high costs associated with treating obesity-related conditions.

These studies highlight the ongoing challenges and potential solutions in obesity treatment, underscoring the importance of human support in effective weight management.