

Fruit Street Telehealth Platform Selected for Clinical Trial to Evaluate Implementation of a Diabetes Prevention Program in WIC Clinics

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Health coaches will use the Fruit Street platform as part of a new Diabetes Prevention Program for postpartum women diagnosed with gestational diabetes who receive services through Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) clinics.

Fruit Street Health, a CDC-recognized provider of the National Diabetes Prevention Program, announced today that its platform has been selected for a research study led by a collaboration between Crescent City Family Services, Tulane University School of Public Health, and Tropical Medicine, and other community partners. This project will study the implementation of the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) lifestyle intervention in postpartum women with recent gestational diabetes who receive services at Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinics.

Gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM), or diabetes diagnosed in the second or third trimester of pregnancy, affects up to 9% of pregnancies in the United States and is associated with a 7- to 9-fold increased risk of later development of type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM). Research has shown that lifestyle interventions focused on calorie restriction and exercise, such as the DPP intervention, substantially reduce the risk of T2DM.

Because pregnant women attend prenatal and postpartum care, the period during and shortly after a pregnancy affected by GDM provides a unique opportunity for intervention. WIC provides continuity of health-related services for women with low income during and after pregnancy and has a wide reach throughout the United States, providing services to more than 1.8 million women each year. “If effective and acceptable, delivery of an adapted DPP to women with recent GDM through WIC has the potential to be efficient, sustainable, and scalable,” said Mary Schultheis, CEO and President of Crescent City Family Services, a non-profit based in Gretna, Louisiana that offers WIC and other supportive services.

The team is planning a 2-month pilot study implementing an adapted DPP to women with a recent history of gestational diabetes who use WIC services in the New Orleans area. WIC nutritionists will serve as health coaches and use Fruit Street’s digital platform to deliver the intervention. Coaches will take advantage of the platform’s dietary and fitness activity tracking, photographing of dietary intake, and two-way mobile messaging to guide participants in reaching lifestyle goals. Measures of diet, physical activity, weight, blood sugar, and intervention acceptability and feasibility will be tracked over the study.

“This effort at Tulane builds on our experience in enabling healthcare professionals to provide the Diabetes Prevention Program to their patients via telehealth,” said Laurence Girard, CEO of Fruit Street Health. “Offering this program to women with recent gestational diabetes through WIC services is an innovative approach that will give participants access to information and coaching they are unlikely to get any other way.”

This project is supported through the National Institutes of Health Maternal Health Community Implementation Project under the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute grant OT2HL158287. This initiative, which is coordinated through Westat, provides funding to create multi-partnerships in vulnerable communities to develop and test implementation strategies to reduce disparities in maternal health.

Fruit Street is a CDC-recognized provider of the National Diabetes Prevention Program which is delivered via telehealth and live group video conferencing on Zoom with registered dietitians. The National Diabetes Prevention Program has been proven to help individuals with prediabetes to reduce their risk for Type 2 diabetes by more than 58% by losing 4-7% of their weight through diet and lifestyle changes. Fruit Street is a public benefit corporation whose mission is to prevent millions of cases of Type 2 diabetes over the next decade. As of December of 2021, the company has raised more than \$30 million from more than 500 physicians who support the social mission of the company. To learn more visit, www.fruitstreet.com.