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and Fitness in Career Personnel

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## Table of Contents

<b>Cover . . . . .</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>SF 298 . . . . .</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction . . . . .</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Body . . . . .</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Key Research Accomplishments . . . . .</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Reportable Outcomes . . . . .</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Conclusions . . . . .</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>References . . . . .</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Appendices . . . . .</b>	<b>13</b>

## Annual Report

### **Introduction:**

The primary purpose of this study is to reduce the proportion of Soldiers at Ft. Bragg and Reservists in the 94<sup>th</sup> Regional Readiness Command (RRC) who fail to meet Army requirements for body fat defined by AR 600-9, the Army Weight Control Program (AWCP), and fitness standards defined by FM 21-20, Physical Fitness Training, Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). The study has been designed to: 1) be a non-clinical, population-based intervention for military personnel, 2) analyze data that the military routinely collects during APFT and height/weight testing (AWCP) for purposes other than this research, 3) meet the standards of “no greater than minimal risk” research, and 4) be conducted with anonymity of participants.

To reduce the proportion of Soldiers who fail to meet body fat (AWCP) and fitness (APFT) standards, an environmental/internet-based intervention will be provided to Soldiers at Ft. Bragg and Reservists of the 94<sup>th</sup> RRC. The Military Services Fitness Database (MSFD) will also be provided to both Ft. Bragg and the 94<sup>th</sup> RRC. It is hypothesized that over the two years of intervention, the percentage of Soldiers who fail to meet body fat and fitness standards will decrease significantly at both sites (Ft. Bragg and the 94<sup>th</sup> RRC). The development of both the MSFD and the environmental/internet-based intervention occurred in close collaboration with the military, particularly USARIEM and Womack Army Medical Center.

### **Body:**

#### Military Services Fitness Database (MSFD)

The MSFD is an electronic database that records and stores body weight/body fat and APFT results of military personnel. The MSFD was developed to meet the requirements of Department of Defense Instruction 1308.3, namely, a standardized method for the collection and

storage of APFT and body weight/fat results. Data for this population-based study are derived from the military's standard operating procedures for the collection of APFT data. Soldiers are required to take the APFT semi-annually, and Reservists take the APFT annually. These data are collected for purposes other than this study, but these data will be analyzed to determine if a non-clinical, environmental/internet-based intervention reduces the proportion of Soldiers who fail to meet fat and fitness standards established by the U.S. Army.

Beta testing of the MSFD has been conducted, and the MSFD has been modified to incorporate the requests and suggestions of military personnel. The military leadership at the Pentagon, Ft. Bragg, and the 94th RRC has viewed the MSFD favorably. In the coming months, it is anticipated that the MSFD will be used for the collection and storage of body fat (AWCP) and fitness (APFT) data for Soldiers at Ft. Bragg and the 94th RRC. MG Adair and COL (P) Flowers, G1, Pentagon, have been briefed on the MSFD. A Memo of Support for implementation of the MSFD for collection of AWCP and APFT data at Ft. Bragg is awaiting signature. In addition, MG Laich, Commander, 94<sup>th</sup> RRC, was briefed on the MSFD and environmental/internet-based intervention and he requested that both be provided to the 94<sup>th</sup> RRC. Once the database is in place and the research protocol is approved, Computer Specialists, who are military personnel and assigned to Ft. Bragg and to the 94th RRC, will send the PBRC researchers limited and anonymous body fat (AWCP) and fitness (APFT) data from the database. The researchers will use these data to determine if the environmental/internet-based intervention reduces the proportion of Soldiers who fail to meet AWCP and APFT standards.

#### Environmental/Internet-based Intervention

The intervention, consisting of an environmental component and an internet (website) component, is designed to promote healthy nutrition and physical fitness to every Soldier at Ft.

Bragg and Reservists in the 94th RRC. The intervention provides users with a safe and effective means to manage body weight, through use of established resources (e.g., public service announcements via media) and a website called H.E.A.L.T.H. (**H**ealthy **E**ating, **A**ctivity, and **L**ifestyle **T**raining **H**eadquarters), which provides credible information on nutrition, physical fitness, and weight management. Due to the non-clinical, population-based design of this study, Soldiers are not formally “recruited” for the study. Nor does this study require a time commitment from Soldiers, though the Soldiers may voluntarily dedicate time to obtaining information from the H.E.A.L.T.H. website or reading health information that is made easily accessible as part of this study.

The environmental component or health promotion program was developed in close consultation with representatives from the US Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (USACHPPM), Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD and representatives from the Nutrition Care Division, Womack Army Medical Center Public Affairs Office, and Information Services Office, Ft. Bragg, NC. The aim of the environmental aspect of the intervention is to use existing military resources to promote healthy eating and exercise and to promote use of the H.E.A.L.T.H. website. The PBRC research team and military representatives from USACHPPM and Ft. Bragg agreed to utilize the following methods to foster an environment that promotes healthy behavior:

- 1) The Public Affairs Office will assist with regular dissemination of health promotion messages in a variety of media formats.
- 2) Womack Army Medical Center will provide opportunities to educate physicians and nurses to promote healthy eating, regular exercise, and use of the H.E.A.L.T.H. website, which will include written handouts and fliers that promote the website.

- 3) Preventive Medicine and Nutrition Care Division will coordinate their activities to routinely promote healthy eating and exercise and to draw attention to the H.E.A.L.T.H. website.
- 4) Information Services will work with the research team to coordinate dissemination of healthy messages via the internet.

Elizabeth W. Mitchell, Ph.D. is leading the implementation of the environmental intervention on post. Dr. Mitchell is located at Ft. Bragg, however, she will also facilitate implementation of the intervention in the 94th RRC. Dr. Mitchell's doctorate is in Communication Processes and Marketing Communication, with a concentration in Health Communication Campaigns. Dr. Mitchell helped the team develop publicity materials designed to promote the HEALTH website. These materials are located in Appendix D.

The internet component of the intervention consists of the H.E.A.L.T.H. website. The website was specifically designed to aid military personnel in achieving healthy nutrition, physical fitness, and healthy management of body weight. Soldiers at Ft. Bragg and Reservists in the 94<sup>th</sup> RRC can use the website to obtain general health information or they can create an "account" that allows them to use to the website to track their progress and develop a more personalized diet and exercise plan. Use of the website is completely anonymous (the PBRC researchers cannot identify an individual user of the website), regardless of whether or not a user creates an account.

The architecture of the website contains three primary sections of information, focused on the following topics: 1) general health education, 2) weight gain prevention and weight maintenance, and 3) weight loss through healthy nutrition and exercise. Section 1 provides users with credible general health information, particularly regarding health topics relevant to

individuals in the military. Section 2 is designed to increase Soldiers' awareness of the importance of maintaining a healthy weight, offer suggestions on lifestyle changes to prevent inappropriate weight gain, and provide information on dietary and physical fitness that take into consideration personal preferences and needs. These two sections are interactive; therefore, health and fitness information is tailored to the individual user. For instance, a dietary intake calculator provides an estimate of the number of calories per day that are required to maintain body weight, and an energy expenditure calculator estimates the number of kilocalories burned during certain types of exercise. In addition, interactive tools are available to help Soldiers create meal plans and develop healthy exercise habits. Section 3 is designed to assist Soldiers in losing weight. This section provides interactive tools to determine the amount by which the Soldier exceeds his/her screening table weight, an estimate of the number of calories necessary to lose weight at a healthy and safe rate (1-2 lbs. per week), and a personalized weight management program, including nutrition and physical fitness planning. Soldiers have the option of creating an account on the website and entering information, such as self-reported body weight, into the website to track their progress over time. However, the PBRC researchers cannot identify a Soldier based on information that they enter into the website.

The website is compatible with the Army Weight Control Program (AWCP). Military personnel who fail to meet performance standards and/or body weight/fat standards are placed on the AWCP for remediation. The AWCP provides nutritional counseling and promotes a weight loss of 3 to 8 pounds per month or a loss of 1% body fat per month. Soldiers enrolled in the AWCP at Ft. Bragg will be encouraged to utilize the website as a tool to aid them in reaching their goals. Satisfaction with the website will be evaluated anonymously when users voluntarily

complete the online satisfaction survey, located in Appendix B.

Support for an internet component has been found among Soldiers. A recent survey of 520 Soldiers at Ft. Bragg who are on the Army Weight Control Program found that 32.7% of Soldiers identified the internet as a weight loss strategy that they think might be helpful (G. Bathalon, personal communication, May 10, 2004). In addition, an internet component to weight loss interventions is consistent with the Institute of Medicine report on weight management in the military, which suggests the development and testing of internet interventions in the context of existing models used by the military (IOM, 2003).

**Key Research Accomplishments:**

- Developed the research team by recruiting and hiring the following new employees:
  - Marianna Politzer, JD – program coordinator
  - Danielle Bellotte, BS – study coordinator
  - Elizabeth Mitchell, Ph.D. – communications scientist
  - Hong-Mei Han, MS – statistician
  - Shelly Prince, MS, RD, LDN – dietician
  - Ryan Russell, BS – exercise physiologist
  - Timothy Nguyen, BS – graphic designer, technical writer
  - David Martin, BA – research associate
  - Lisa Daugherty, BA – computer programmer/graphic design artist
  - Sean Marshall, BA – computer programmer
- Entered final stages of development of the MSFD
- Assisted with installation of the MSFD for beta testing at selected sites on post at Ft. Bragg
- Conducted beta testing of MSFD during A Company, B Company and DENTAC's October 2003 and April 2004 PT tests
- Conducted statistical analyses on beta test data as part of product development process

- Continued discussion with information technology division personnel as to technical support requirements for the MSFD and procedures for software installation on post
- Continued development of MSFD technical support manual
- Traveled to various sites to brief key military personnel, meet with military personnel involved in beta testing of MSFD, oversee beta testing of the MSFD, discuss technical support requirements and software installation issues, and solicit feedback on the MSFD and the HEALTH website (see Appendix E for detailed travel summary)
- Completed architecture for HEALTH website, and continued programming and content development
- Attended Army Weight Control Program sessions at the Nutrition Care Division of the Womack Army Medical Center, and discussed further opportunities to collaborate with the Nutrition Care Division in preparation for beta testing the HEALTH website
- Solicited informal feedback on the HEALTH website from discussion groups organized on post at Ft. Bragg by Dr. Mitchell
- Developed publicity materials designed to promote use of the HEALTH website
- Developed a list of contact organizations for dissemination of publicity materials; solicited information from representatives of contact organizations regarding methods, formatting, approval and dissemination of publicity materials
- Completed development of the protocol for submission to the PBRC IRB and the HSRRB
- Completed a review and technical report of Internet websites related to weight management, titled "Weight Management on the Internet: A Review of web Resources for weight loss, nutrition, and physical activity"

- Presented a talk titled “Approaches at Home: Internet-based Interventions for Prevention and Treatment of Obesity” at the DHHS-sponsored conference, *Weighing Down Obesity*, in New Orleans on August 8, 2003
- Presented a full-day workshop on Weight Management at the DOD Population Health & Health Promotion Conference in Albuquerque, NM on August 14, 2003

**Reportable Outcomes:**

N/A

**Conclusions:**

Development of the H.E.A.L.T.H. website and the MSFD is nearing completion. Data collection is scheduled to begin in October 2004 and will continue until May 2007. This quasi-experimental study utilizes a within-subjects or repeated design and each site (Ft. Bragg and the 94<sup>th</sup> RRC) is a grouping variable. Anonymous body fat (AWCP) and APFT data from Soldiers at Ft. Bragg and the 94<sup>th</sup> RRC will be evaluated before implementation of an environmental/internet-based intervention (baseline). Two baseline assessments will be conducted for the Soldiers at Ft. Bragg and one for the Reservists in the 94<sup>th</sup> RRC. Each assessment occurs when Soldiers complete their height/weight measurements (AWCP) and APFT (see Figure 1, below). Following the baseline measurements, the environmental/internet-based intervention will be implemented.

Data collection will continue for two years to test the efficacy of the intervention. The dependent or outcome variables are: 1) the proportion of Soldiers who fail to meet Army standards for AWCP, defined by AR 600-9, and APFT, defined by FM 21-20, 2) satisfaction with the website, and 3) website utilization. Appendix A includes the variables that will be used to evaluate the primary outcome or dependent variable (i.e., the proportion of Soldiers who fail

to meet body fat and fitness standards). Computer Specialists assigned to Ft. Bragg and to the 94<sup>th</sup> RRC will extract these anonymous data from the MSFD and send them to the PBRC research team. Satisfaction with the website will be evaluated anonymously when Soldiers voluntarily complete the online satisfaction survey, included in Appendix B. Finally, utilization of the website will be evaluated anonymously by analyzing the variables listed in Appendix C, which measure the amount of use of the website. Data from the study will be analyzed using conventional statistics.

Figure 1. Study time-line.

	<u>Measurement</u>					
	<u>Baseline 1</u>	<u>Baseline 2</u>	<u>Time 1</u>	<u>Time 2</u>	<u>Time 3</u>	<u>Time 4</u>
<b>Ft. Bragg</b>	Oct. 2004	May 2005	Oct. 2005	May 2006	Oct. 2006	May 2007
<b>94<sup>th</sup> RRC</b>	~Oct. 2004		~Oct. 2005		~Oct. 2006	

*Note:* The exact dates of measurement for the 94<sup>th</sup> RRC have not been determined.

**References:**

Department of Defense Instruction 1308.3 (2002). *DoD Physical Fitness and Body Fat Programs Procedures*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

Institute of Medicine. *Weight Management: State of the Science and Opportunities for Military Programs*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

U.S. Department of the Army (1987). *The Army Weight Control Program* (Army Regulation 600-9). Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

U.S. Department of the Army (1992). *Physical Fitness Training* (Army Field Manual 21-20). Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

## Appendices

### Appendix A Limited Dataset to Evaluate Soldiers' Fatness, Fitness, and Ability to Meet AWCP and APFT Standards

Computer Specialists who are military personnel and assigned to Ft. Bragg and the 94th RRC will transfer the following variables from the Military Service Fitness Databases to the researchers at PBRC. All data will be electronic and anonymous; the PBRC researchers will not be able to identify, directly or indirectly, individual Soldiers or Reservists.

**Participant Number.** The Participant Number is generated by performing a Secure Hash Algorithm (SHA-1) on the Soldier's Social Security Number. Each Participant Number is unique to a Soldier but impossible to decrypt to learn the identity of that soldier (the Soldiers and Reservists cannot be identified, directly or indirectly). The researchers at PBRC will never have access to Social Security Numbers or names of Soldiers or Reservists.

Age

Race

Grade/Rank

Deployment: Has the Soldier been deployed in the past one year?

Date of APFT

Height

Body weight

Percent body fat (if measured)

Percent body fat Pass/Fail

APFT scores:

Push-ups Score and number of repetitions in two minutes

Sit-ups Score and number of repetitions in two minutes

Run Score and time for the two-mile event

Alternate Event Score (if applicable)

800 yard swim

6.2 mile stationary bike

6.2 mile real bike

2.5 mile walk

Total APFT Score

APFT Pass/Fail



7) Did you create an account on the website? Yes No. If yes, was creating an account helpful?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Never Always

For the following questions, please place a mark next to the number that best describes how strongly you agree with the statement.

### *Access and navigability of the web site*

8) The web site was well organized.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Strongly disagree Strongly agree

9) The web site was easy to move around in.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Strongly disagree Strongly agree

10) The links were helpful.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Strongly disagree Strongly agree

11) The instructions on the website were clear.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Strongly disagree Strongly agree

### *Design/layout and text*

12) Graphics and charts were attractive and visually pleasing.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Strongly disagree Strongly agree

13) Text was presented in a simple and straightforward way.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Strongly disagree Strongly agree

14) The website was easy to read.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Strongly disagree Strongly agree

*Other*

- 15) I learned about this web site from:
- a) newspaper advertisement
  - b) poster
  - c) brochure
  - d) 1<sup>st</sup> sergeant
  - e) health care provider or other on-post professional
  - f) other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_.
- 16) I have visited the web site \_\_\_\_\_ times (type in actual number)
- 17) What is the highest grade or year of school you completed?
- a) Some high school
  - b) Grade 12 or GED (high school graduate)
  - c) Some college or graduated from technical school
  - d) College graduate
  - e) Post graduate or professional degree
  - f) Don't know
- 18) Please indicate the year in which you were born:
- a) Year: 19\_\_ \_\_.

**Thank you very much for your time!**

## **Appendix C**

### **Evaluation of HEALTH Website Utilization**

The following anonymous data will be collected to evaluate utilization of the HEALTH website.

1. Number of Sessions and Internet Protocol Address Number.

A session occurs each time that the website is accessed and provides a measure of website utilization. The Internet Protocol Address Number cannot be used to identify a website user, either directly or indirectly, but recording of the Internet Protocol Address Number is necessary in order to record the number of sessions.

2. Session Duration.

Session duration is defined as the amount of time that the website was accessed during any single session.

3. Order of page requests.

As users navigate through the contents of the website, the pattern of utilization will be evaluated to determine if redesigning the website might increase its ease of use.

4. Information that allows people to track their progress at making healthy changes to their diet and exercise habits.

Users of the website have the option of creating an account on the website that allows them to track their progress by entering information such as self-reported body weight, number of exercise sessions, and minutes of exercise, which the website will graphically display and compare to their established goals. Neither creating an account on the website nor entering any of this information into the website allows the researchers at PBRC to identify a website user. Use of the website is entirely anonymous.

**Appendix D**  
**Publicity Material**

The aim of these publicity materials is to promote use of the HEALTH website.

# WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO STAY ON TOP?



*EAT WELL.*

*BE ACTIVE.*



*BE READY.*

[HTTP://ARMYHEALTH.PBRC.EDU](http://ARMYHEALTH.PBRC.EDU)

# H.E.A.L.T.H.

HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE  
INFORMATION ON THE H.E.A.L.T.H.  
WEB SITE PLEASE CONTACT:

LOLITA BURRELL, PH.D.  
BLOG 4-2817 REILLY ROAD  
FORT BRAGG, NC 28310

OR LOG ON TO:

[HTTP://ARMYHEALTH.PBRC.EDU](http://ARMYHEALTH.PBRC.EDU)



# H.E.A.L.T.H.

EAT WELL.

BE ACTIVE.

BE READY.



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ARE YOU READY?  
[HTTP://ARMYHEALTH.PBRC.EDU](http://ARMYHEALTH.PBRC.EDU)

**Appendix E**  
**Summary of Travel**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Travelers</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
7/03	USARIEM Natick, MA	Donald Williamson Ray Allen David Martin	Executive Committee meeting - review progress, discuss technical support requirements, and develop plans for implementation of the research protocol
9/03	Ft. Bragg, NC	Donald Williamson Ray Allen Marianna Politzer David Martin	Briefing/overview of project for: BG Weightman, 1SG Barnes, SFC Rhodes, 1SG Murray, LTC Rice, CSM Penn, COL Maness, LTC Doyle, and COL Carvalho Mtgs. w/ Joann Hooker (PAO), LTC Ellison (Chief of Nutrition Care Division), Mr. Dean Spice, and Dr. Mitchell
9/03	Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD	Donald Williamson Ray Allen David Martin	Briefing/overview of project and discussion of technical support requirements for the MSFD and HEALTH website: COL Gemryl Samuels (Director of Health Promotion & Wellness), LTC Hall, MAJ Corum, Mr. Steve Kistner (Director of Technical services, deputy to BG Bester), Ms. Judy Harris (Hooah4Health CHPPM Project Officer), and Ms. Ann Stark (Hooah4Health contractor) Mtgs. with Ms. Harris and Ms. Stark.
9/03	Ft. Bragg, NC	Ray Allen Marianna Politzer	Mtgs. re: MSFD: 1SGs Barnes, Rhodes, Murray and Lane (DENTAC), CSM Penn Mtg. w/ Dr. Mitchell re: Environmental Intervention; mtg. w/ LTC Brenda Ellison re: use of MSFD/Health website by Nutrition Care Division
10/03	Ft. Bragg, NC	Ray Allen Marianna Politzer	Briefing/overview of project for CSM Whitley - Attended "Weigh to Stay" sessions, mtgs. w/ LTC Ellison, 1LT Harvill, and MAJ Gohdes
10/03	Ft. Bragg, NC	Ray Allen Marianna Politzer Eric LeBlanc	October PT Testing
11/03	Ft. Bragg, NC	Ray Allen Guy LaVergne	Mtgs. w/ A & B CO 1SGs & Training NCOs. Software installation on DENTAC computers (mtg. w/ Mr. Smith)
12/03	Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD	Donald Williamson Ray Allen	Briefing/overview of project for BG Bester
12/03	Ft. Bragg, NC	Ray Allen Marianna Politzer	Mtgs. w/ SSG Johnson (A CO), Mr. Dean Spice, SFC Washington, and SFC Lane (DENTAC) - Dr. Mitchell led informal discussion groups to solicit feedback to specific pages & features of HEALTH website.
1/04	PBRC Baton Rouge, LA	Executive Committee	Executive Committee meeting - to update the Executive Committee as to our progress, and to discuss next steps.
3/04	Ft. Bragg, NC	Ray Allen Marianna Politzer Danielle Bellotte	Mtg. w/ Mr. Dean Spice re: SSAA Mtgs. w/ SFC Lane & SSGs Phillips & Johnson Mtg. w/ Dr. Mitchell re: development of posters and brochures promoting use of the HEALTH website.
3/04	Ft. Bragg, NC	Ray Allen	Mtgs. w/ SFC Lane & SSGs Phillips & Johnson Major updates to MSFD, updated applications and databases for A & B Companies and DENTAC
4/04	Ft. Bragg, NC	Ray Allen Sean Marshall	April PT Testing