

Guided weight loss center opens

Monarch Medical Weight Loss Center creates personalized programs for patients

By Barb Randall

Staff Reporter

Lake Oswego Review/West Linn Tidings

Dec. 13, 2007

With the New Year around the corner, many Americans will be resolving to lose weight when the holiday parties subside. Just in time to help with those efforts, Monarch Medical Weight Loss Center has opened in Lake Oswego. Monarch Medical Weight Loss Center is a medically based, physician-guided approach to the treatment of obesity. The Monarch approach includes medical testing and body composition analysis to create a personalized weight loss program for each patient.

“A doctor’s involvement is particularly important when there is diabetes, high blood pressure or other obesity related disease,” said Dr. Robert Graham, the center’s administrative medical director and one of the company’s founders.

Monarch Medical first opened as Medical Weight Loss Centers of Oregon in Eugene in April 2006. A team of seven physicians worked on a unique design and one-on-one counseling necessary to build a medical clinic concept that would provide demonstrable solutions to the U.S. population’s epidemic of obesity and it’s associated medical complications.

“There is no magic for losing weight,” Graham said. “It happens only through hard work. We have some ideas that make sense, medically and scientifically.”

The program helps you lose weight through a combination of nutrition counseling, medication therapy, behavioral modification, motivational tools, education and exercise.

Since there are medical doctors on staff at each center, qualified patients may be prescribed appetite suppressants to aid weight loss. Lipotropic amino acids and vitamin B injections can be utilized to improve energy and enhance weight loss as well. For those preferring non-prescription medications, Monarch offers a natural appetite suppressant and other vitamins and nutrition supplements.

Dr. Graham stressed that the center works carefully with the patient’s primary care provider. Rather than incur additional medical costs, the center takes current medical history and laboratory results from the primary care provider.

We focus on the treatment of obesity and rely on our patient’s primary care and specialist physicians to provide their other medical needs, Graham said.

During the initial visit, patients are given a physical examination. They complete questionnaires regarding activity level, eating style, diet history and medical history. They receive training on how the program works and more important why it works.

The program calls for patients to take nutritional supplements. Though not mandatory, meal replacement products are encouraged, especially when beginning the program, to ensure compliance to the program. Patients weigh in weekly and are welcome to visit the center and check in with staff members online anytime for support and program clarification.

Graham said the program is based on patients eating small frequent meals with a higher protein content.

However, he feels it is the empathetic staff that provides the key ingredient: support and service.

“We’ll find a way to make it work for everyone,” Graham said. “Bottom line is that they have to make changes. We retrain people to turn off their internal appetite clocks. This new lifestyle has to be what they follow for life.”

Though the American Medical Association does not recognize obesity as a disease, Graham and Monarch consider it to be a recurring chronic illness. Many dieters lose weight and then gain it back, because they have not made the changes necessary to keep it off.

“We want to train them to notice when weight is coming back on and to return to their healthful eating then. Those triggers will be out there and we want to train them to not eat in their old ways,” he said.

Program fees are \$275 for the initial visit, which includes a return visit in two weeks. Monthly return visits are \$99. Special fees are designed for six and 12-week programs. Monarch Medical Weight Loss Center is located at 17020 Pilkington Rd. The hours of operation are Monday and Tuesday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with doctor visits available on Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. As client numbers increase, clinic hours will expand. For more information, visit the Web site at www.monarchmedical.net.