

## **The Experiences of Weight Control, Exercise and Healthy Eating in Medically Triggered Patients**

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### ABSTRACT

Medical and emotional triggers have been linked to successful weight loss maintenance in women. However, due to physicians' barriers and lack of expertise, many patients are left to their own devices when navigating the difficulties of weight control behaviors. Additionally, there is a lack of guidelines for third-party programs wanting to accommodate and assist these recently triggered patients. Thus, the purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences and meanings of weight-control, exercise and healthy eating in medically triggered, rural women. We conducted qualitative interviews informed by existential and phenomenological practices. Overall, eight themes (trigger realization, trigger meaning, knowing what to do, perceptions of self, perceptions of eating, perceptions of exercise and exercise environment, the exercise environment, monitoring, support and accountability) emerged and embodied patients' complex experiences. Novel findings expressed that individuals knew what to do, although not always correct, but depended on information and feelings provided by triggering events. These triggers (e.g. medical, emotional, clothing) were complex, and perceived as meaningful to the individual. Experiences were highly impacted by perceptions of self, eating (both healthy and unhealthy), exercise, and the exercise environment. Both self-monitoring and social support provided helpful and detrimental contributions to controlling one's body weight. Future interventions and weight control counseling should account for the complexities associated with perceptions and experiences to assist in behavior change.