

Care providers' understanding of obesity treatment is limited

March 23 2018

Despite the high prevalence of obesity among U.S. adults, provision of recommended treatments for obesity remains low. Providers cite lack of time, lack of reimbursement, and lack of knowledge as major barriers to treating patients with obesity. A new study published in *Obesity* assessed health care professionals' (HCPs') knowledge of evidence-based guidelines for nonsurgical treatment of obesity.

In this study, the authors conducted a web-based survey of a nationally representative sample of 1506 internists, family practitioners, obstetricians/gynecologists, and nurse practitioners to determine their understanding of obesity treatment guidelines. The results indicate that most providers lack knowledge and understanding of recommended obesity treatments, such as behavioral counseling and pharmacotherapy.

Author William Dietz, MD, PhD, FTOS, Past President of The Obesity Society, Director of the STOP Obesity Alliance and Chair of the Sumner M. Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness at the Milken Institute School of Public Health at The George Washington University, said, "Our findings offer [health](#) professionals and medical educators a strong rationale for incorporating enhanced training on the prevention and management of obesity into their curricula."

The Obesity Society Spokesperson Ken Fujioka, MD, FTOS, Director of the Center for Weight Management and Director of the Nutrition and Metabolic Research Center at Scripps Clinic, said, "This is a big-time paper that clearly demonstrates the lack of basic knowledge about

obesity in the health care community. Admittedly, we have always known this, but this is clear evidence that we have a major problem because obesity is the most common disease seen in primary care." These findings strongly suggest that additional obesity training is needed.

Additionally, in an accompanying editorial published in *Obesity*, Robert Kushner, MD, FTOS, examines the impact of this study. "The study suggests that more obesity education is needed among primary health care providers that focuses on knowledge along with enhanced competencies in patient care management, communication, and behavior change," said Dr. Kushner, Past President of The Obesity Society, Professor of Medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, and Director of the Center for Lifestyle Medicine at Northwestern Medicine in Chicago, IL. Overall, more obesity education and training are needed among health care professionals.

Provided by George Washington University

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