

International study reveals disconnect between perceptions of health care providers and people with obesity worldwide

April 29 2019

The disconnect between perceptions of health care providers (HCPs) and people with obesity (PwO) is revealed in a new international study (the ACTION-IO study) presented at this year's European Congress on Obesity (ECO 2019) in Glasgow, UK, and published in the journal *Diabetes, Obesity and Metabolism*. Among the study's findings are that while 71% of HCPs believe PwO are not interested in losing weight, actually only 7% of PwO report they are not interested—a 10-fold difference.

ACTION IO is the largest study of its kind to investigate barriers to [obesity management](#) from the perspective of people with obesity and healthcare professionals. The study surveyed over 14,500 people with obesity and nearly 2,800 HCPs from 11 countries: Australia, Chile, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Spain, UAE and the UK. ACTION IO supplements the valuable insights gained from the previous ACTION studies conducted in the US and Canada, published in 2017.

Other key findings from the study include that 81% of PwO believe it is their sole responsibility to lose [weight](#); and only 51% of PwO discussed their weight with their HCPs in the past five years, but only after a significant delay of a mean of six years from when their weight struggles began.

Reporting on actual attempts to lose weight were also very different between the two groups: 81% of PwO said they had made at least one serious weight-loss effort in the past, while HCPs reported that only 35% of their patients had done so, possibly indicating that PwO are not necessarily comfortable discussing the subject with HCPs or that HCPs were not aware of an attempt being made. That said, the study also found that 68% of PwO would like HCPs to start conversations around weight management during appointments.

"Our data suggest that PwO are motivated to lose weight and there is an opportunity for HCPs to initiate earlier, effective weight loss conversations with minimal fear of offence," says the study's lead author Professor Ian Caterson of the Boden Institute, Charles Perkins Centre, University of Sydney, NSW, Australia.

He adds: "PwO may not recognise the need to reduce excess weight until it has an impact on their health, further supporting the requirement for HCPs to raise the topic of weight before such obesity-related complications occur. Our study also reveals a global need for greater education for both PwO and HCPs on the [biological basis](#) and clinical management of obesity, and for a more positive HCP attitude towards initiating weight discussions and management."

He concludes: "We hope that these findings can help remove the barriers between people living with obesity and their health care providers and drive more positive engagement in the treatment of [obesity](#)."

Provided by European Association for the Study of Obesity

Citation: International study reveals disconnect between perceptions of health care providers and people with obesity worldwide (2019, April 29) retrieved 7 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-04-international-reveals-disconnect-perceptions->

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