

Few oncologists refer patients to weight management programs

June 6 2019



(HealthDay)—While oncology providers are aware of the link between

obesity and cancer, few provide referrals to support patients' lifestyle changes, according to a study published online May 16 in the *Journal of Oncology Practice*.

Jennifer A. Ligibel, M.D., from the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, and colleagues surveyed 971 oncology providers in the United States and internationally to assess their current knowledge of and attitudes toward the link between obesity and related factors and [cancer risk](#) and outcomes. Additional survey questions focused on practice patterns around assessment of body [weight](#), physical activity, and nutrition and referrals to relevant programs to support behavior change after a cancer diagnosis.

The researchers found that the majority of respondents recognized that being obese or overweight has implications for cancer treatment outcomes (93 percent) and agreed that addressing a patient's weight should be a standard part of cancer care (89 percent). Relatedly, a majority of respondents reported that they routinely assess a patient's body mass index (72 percent) and physical activity level (78 percent) during treatment but were less likely to assess a patient's diet (58 percent). Just under half of respondents (46 percent) reported that they rarely or never refer overweight or obese patients for [weight management](#) during treatment, and only 42 percent said that they routinely refer patients to a dietitian to address healthy eating options. Barriers to incorporating weight management and physical activity programs into the treatment of cancer patients include lack of education on related topics, lack of time, lack of appropriate programs for weight management and physical activity, and perceived resistance by patients to making lifestyle changes.

"These results suggest that new initiatives are needed to support the education and training of oncology providers around weight management, [physical activity](#), and nutrition in patients with [cancer](#) and

survivors, especially those focused on referral and implementation of weight management and related programs," the authors write.

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Citation: Few oncologists refer patients to weight management programs (2019, June 6) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-06-oncologists-patients-weight.html>

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