

Study finds obesity medicine specialists are using evidence-based care

September 30 2020, by Michel Elben



Obesity and weight-management care supported by scientific research and clinical trials is best for patients, says a survey by Johns Hopkins Medicine researchers. They urge physicians to offer services to their patients with obesity such as nutritional counseling. Credit: Public domain image courtesy of Carlos Silva

The United States obesity rate is now more than 40%, and physicians are looking for new and more effective ways to treat the problem. In 2013,

the American Medical Association recognized obesity as a complex, chronic disease that requires medical attention. However, past research studies showed that the percentage of physicians providing adequate counseling and treatment to patients with obesity remains low.

Additionally, patients with [obesity](#) are often unaware that such services even exist.

To better understand the state of obesity [medicine](#) in the United States, Johns Hopkins Medicine researchers surveyed physicians certified in the discipline by the American Board of Obesity Medicine (ABOM) found that these practitioners, whose numbers are low, commonly offer key services supported by scientific research and clinical trials.

This suggests that primary care clinicians can be increasingly confident that their patients will receive this "evidence-based care" when referred to an obesity specialist. Overall, most of the respondents endorsed the use of nutrition, behavioral services, weight-loss surgical care and anti-obesity medications approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The findings were published online on Sept. 10, 2020, in the journal *Clinical Obesity*.

"Modifications are key to losing weight," says study lead author Kimberly Gudzone, M.D., M.P.H., associate professor of medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, and director of both the Johns Hopkins Healthful Eating, Activity and Weight Program and the Johns Hopkins Obesity Medicine Fellowship. "A lot of [physician](#) training doesn't include obesity treatments such as lifestyle counseling and medication management, and without it, you're unlikely to help patients lose weight. We want to ensure that obesity medicine providers are providing great care to help patients achieve long-term success."

Through ABOM, Gudzone surveyed over 490-obesity medicine certified physicians. The physicians were asked about their current clinical practices in the hope of learning if the services they offer are in line with currently accepted science.

Gudzone and her colleagues found that the majority of ABOM physicians responding to their survey offered nutritional (90%), exercise (68%) and mental health (77%) counseling to their patients. Only a few offered minimally invasive procedures (24%), but most provided care before and after surgery (63%). Most (83%) prescribed FDA-approved medications—both short- and long-term agents (71%).

Gudzone's team concluded that most of the survey participants' obesity medicine services are evidenced based.

Gudzone plans to use the study's findings to raise patient awareness that there are health care providers specifically trained to help with obesity and its consequences, such as a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, certain cancers and premature death. She also hopes the study results can be used to identify where gaps may exist in obesity care and to support development of more comprehensive treatments.

More information: Kimberly A. Gudzone et al. Physicians certified by the American Board of Obesity Medicine provide evidence-based care, *Clinical Obesity* (2020). [DOI: 10.1111/cob.12407](https://doi.org/10.1111/cob.12407)

Provided by Johns Hopkins University

Citation: Study finds obesity medicine specialists are using evidence-based care (2020, September 30) retrieved 14 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-09-obesity-medicine-specialists-evidence-based.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.