

Weight Bias (Obesity Sensitivity): Creating a Weight Tolerant Culture

Objectives

- Understand weight bias
- Understand negative effects of weight bias
- Understand characteristics of a weight tolerant culture
- Understand the concerns, bias, and discrimination obese patients face everyday, in order for you to better understand their struggles and fears
- Be better equipped to understand and care for the obese patient

Weight Bias

“Discrimination and stigmatization suffered by those with a large body size.”

“Weight bias can be so pervasive that the effects are known to reduce and/or inhibit educational attainment, employment and personal relationships.”



Why Are We Biased?

- Obesity is often perceived to be under personal control and associated with:
 - Lack of self discipline
 - Lack of will power
 - Laziness
 - Self indulgence
- Our culture values thinness
- Society frequently blames the victim rather than addressing environmental conditions that contribute to obesity.



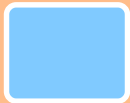
What Causes Obesity?



Variety of factors



Eating too many calories



Not getting enough physical activity



Body weight is a result of:
Genes, Metabolism, Behavior, Environment, Culture,
Socioeconomic Status

Background and Significance

- 2 in 3 adults are considered to be overweight or obese
- 1 in 3 adults are considered to be obese
- 1 in 20 adults are considered to have extreme obesity
- One third of children and adolescents ages 6-19 are considered to be overweight or obese
- 35.7% of the US population are obese
- Obesity contributed to \$147 billion dollars in medical costs in 2008.

Weight Bias in the Healthcare Setting

- Obese patients may delay healthcare due to weight bias within the healthcare setting, thereby delaying early prevention and management of health problems.
 - Reasons for delaying care:
 - Disrespectful treatment
 - Embarrassment at being weighed
 - Negative attitudes of healthcare providers
 - Unsolicited advice to lose weight
 - Medical equipment that is too small to be functional
- 80% of obese surgery patients report being treated disrespectfully by medical professionals

Negative Effects of Weight Bias

- Lack of preventative health
- More severe illnesses/worsening of illness due to fear of healthcare settings and delay in care
- Psychological and emotional effects (i.e. depression, anxiety)



What Can We Do As Health Care Providers?

- Consider that patients may have had negative experiences with health professionals
- Recognize that being overweight is a product of many factors
- Recognize that many patients have tried to lose weight repeatedly
- Emphasize behavioral changes rather than weight
- Acknowledge the difficulty of lifestyle change
- Realize small weight losses can result in big health gains
- Create a Supportive Environment

(Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity Yale University)



Weight Tolerant Culture

Use supportive language

OLD

Overweight, obese

Willpower

Good/Bad

Diet

Exercise Regimen

Expectations

Prescribe

Limit, restrict

Ideal Weight

NEW

Person/Patient of size

Commitment

What works for you

Eating Style

Activity Style/Physical activity

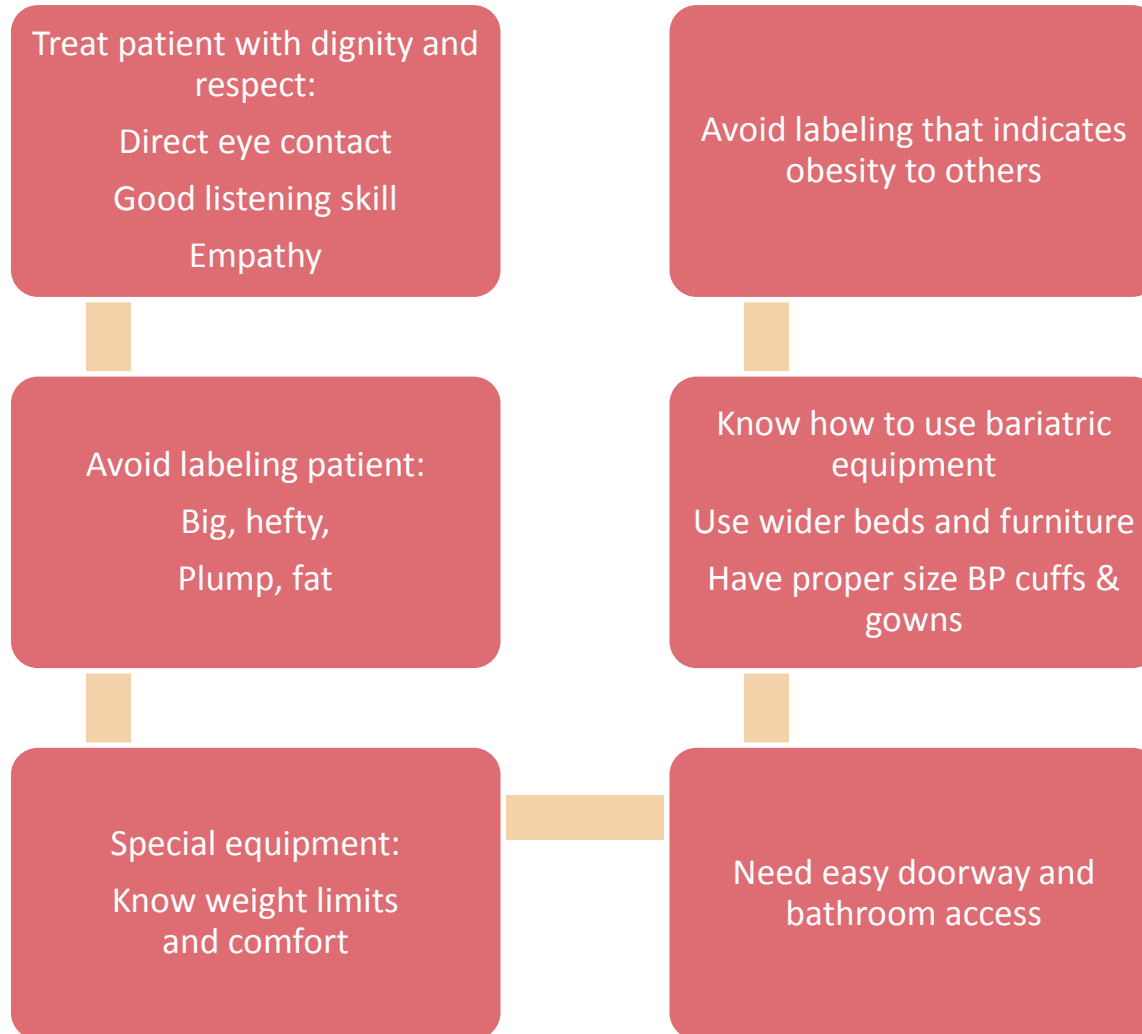
Discoveries

Negotiate

Choice, experience

Healthy Weight

Weight Tolerant Culture cont.



Weight Tolerant Culture cont.

- Scales should be kept in a place where patients can be weighed privately
- Don't make loud requests for extra large items
- Don't say: "I need a "Big Boy" bed"
Instead, say: "I would like to request a Bariatric wheelchair/Bariatric bed"
- Don't say: All available lifting help to room 123
Instead, say: "All available help for transfer report to Nurses' station"

*Your help
is needed!*

Weight Tolerant Culture cont.



Don't tolerate behind-the-back whispers and jokes about obesity, even in private.



Be a good role model and confront weight bias in the workplace.



Obesity is now considered a disease by the American Medical Association, would you be biased towards a patient with a disease such as diabetes? Or coronary artery disease?

Summary

- Weight stigma is common in health care settings
- Obesity bias may decrease quality and use of health care services for many individuals
- Health professionals can make a difference by becoming aware of their own biases, developing empathy, and working to address the needs and concerns of obese patients.

(Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity Yale University)

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Thank You

Slides adapted from Marian
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