

Divergence in Perceptions and Attitudes among People with Obesity, Healthcare Professionals, and Employers create Barriers to Effective Obesity Management: Results of the National ACTION Study

Kaplan LM¹, Golden A², Jinnett K³, Kolotkin RL⁴, Kyle T⁵, Look M⁶, Nadglowski J⁷, O'Neil PM⁸, Parry T³, Tomaszewski KJ⁹, Guerrero G¹⁰, Lilleøre SK¹¹, Dhurandhar NV¹²

1. *Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA, USA*
2. *NP from Home, LLC., Munds Park, AZ, USA*
3. *Integrated Benefits Institute, San Francisco, CA, USA*
4. *Quality of Life Consulting, Durham, NC, USA*
5. *ConscienHealth, Pittsburgh, PA, USA*
6. *San Diego Sports Medicine and Family Health, San Diego, CA, USA*
7. *Obesity Action Coalition, Tampa, FL, USA*
8. *Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, SC, USA*
9. *KJT Group, Inc, Honeoye Falls, NY, USA*
10. *Novo Nordisk Inc., Plainsboro, NJ, USA*
11. *Novo Nordisk A/S, Søborg, Denmark*
12. *Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX, USA*

BACKGROUND: We investigated barriers, behaviors and perceptions towards obesity management (OM) among people with obesity (PwO), healthcare providers (HCPs) and employers.

METHODS: Online surveys using cross-sectional, US-based stratified sample design. Adult PwO (N=3008, BMI \geq 30 from self-reported height and weight), 606 HCPs (83% PCPs, 17% weight loss specialists), and 153 employers completed surveys.

RESULTS:

Despite several "serious" weight loss (WL) attempts, only 23% of PwO reported a 10% weight loss during the past 3 years; 44% of those maintained WL >1 year. Most respondents acknowledged obesity as a disease and perceived OM health benefits. Among PwO, 82% considered WL to be "completely" their responsibility; 72% of HCPs felt they had "responsibility to actively contribute" to WL efforts, while only 18% of employers agreed that employees' WL was "partially" employers' responsibility. While 98% of PwO described their weight status as "overweight" (48%) or "obese" (50%), only about half (55%) reported receiving a formal obesity diagnosis. Few (16%) PwO had a follow-up appointment with their HCP after initial OM conversations. HCPs felt "comfortable" having OM conversations, but efforts were often deprioritized due to limited time. Perceived value of employer-sponsored wellness offerings differed between PwO and employers, as PwO see less value; employers had concerns about OM insurance coverage.

CONCLUSIONS:

OM perceptions, attitudes, and resulting behaviors varied widely among respondent groups, potentially jeopardizing overall OM outcomes. Initial OM conversations between PwO and HCPs are few and rarely continued at follow-up visits. These results suggest that initiatives fostering patient-HCP dialogue and enhanced employer understanding are needed to support effective OM efforts.