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# EveryBODY Matters

3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Weight Bias Summit Summary

May 26–27, 2016 | Edmonton, Alberta



[www.obesitynetwork.ca](http://www.obesitynetwork.ca)



# EveryBODY Matters

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Weight Bias Summit:

Moving beyond raising awareness to creating change!

### BACKGROUND

Canadians living with obesity face widespread weight bias and discrimination – from strangers, educators, employers, health professionals, media and even friends and family. This has negative consequences, including shame and guilt, anxiety, depression, poor self-esteem and body dissatisfaction that can lead to unhealthy weight-control practices. Weight discrimination also negatively affects access to education, employment and medical care.

Despite decades of research demonstrating the negative impact of weight bias on health and quality of life, we've only see a handful of effective ways to reduce it. Few agree on what the strategies and key messages should be used to reduce weight bias, so it's difficult to judge how well these approaches are doing. It's equally as hard to decide on what else governments, health professionals, employers and others could be doing to make a difference.

In May 2016, The Canadian Obesity Network (CON-RCO) invited 42 participants from across Canada and the United States to develop practical weight bias reduction approaches as well as strategies to better evaluate the impact of efforts made locally, provincially and nationally through research, education and action. Participants in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Weight Bias Summit included individuals living with obesity, researchers studying weight bias, health professionals, civil servants and other experts whose experience and expertise were seen as relevant to the discussion (e.g.,

perspectives from the HIV-AIDs and LGBTQ communities). The 1st and 2nd Canadian Weight Bias Summits in 2011 and 2015 focused on raising awareness about weight bias and identifying areas where more research can guide what we do about it. The objective of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Summit took a more practical approach to create opportunities for future action.

Participants were asked to present on and/or discuss the following questions:

- How is weight bias experienced and addressed by individuals living with obesity, health professionals and other obesity stakeholders?
- What are some weight bias reduction interventions and resources available in Canada?
- What are some common messages, strategies, principles and language used from existing weight bias interventions that we can all agree will advance changes in practice and policy?
- How can we incorporate these messages, strategies, principles and language into future weight bias reduction interventions?

Research updates and practical knowledge exchange were presented by 13 presenters in short (8–10 minute) presentations. Following each section of speakers, the group reflected upon and discussed key messages and recommendations from the presentations.

The presentations included:

- Sharing of narrative accounts from people living with obesity about their experiences with weight bias in the healthcare and education systems.

## WHO ARE WE?

The Canadian Obesity Network-Réseau canadien en obésité (CON-RCO) is Canada's authoritative voice on evidence-based approaches for obesity prevention, treatment, and policy. Our mission is to improve the lives of Canadians affected by obesity through the advancement of anti-discrimination, prevention and treatment efforts. Our goals are to address the social stigma associated with obesity, change the way policy makers and health professionals approach it, and improve access to evidence-based prevention and treatment resources. Find out more at [obesitynetwork.ca/public](http://obesitynetwork.ca/public), or on Facebook at

 [facebook.com/CONRCO](https://facebook.com/CONRCO)



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## 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Weight Bias Summit:

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- Sharing results of a study looking at weight bias reduction interventions among health professionals
- Discussing how accommodations, inclusive language and policies can reduce weight bias, and sharing results from a weight bias survey in Alberta Health Services (the health authority for the province of Alberta).
- Discussing critical weight studies' history, theory, language and major findings
- Discussing lessons learned from the field of social justice education, and sharing results of studies of the way we teach and learn about obesity.
- Highlighting existing weight bias reduction interventions, approaches and resources
- Sharing strategies and best practices from conducting stigma reduction initiatives in other marginalized groups (e.g. sexual and gender minority individuals, people living with mental illness, diabetes, AIDS)

The large group discussion following each of the presentations helped to summarize the key points of the presentations and bring consensus to the direction of the Summit.

The key points raised in these discussions were as follows:

- Importance of highlighting the economic and human costs associated with weight bias
- People with obesity (defined as a chronic disease) deserve to be treated with respect and dignity in the health-care and education systems
- We must change the common notion that obesity is a lifestyle/behaviour choice

- Distinction between individuals who have obesity (i.e. a chronic disease) versus individuals who identify themselves as "fat" (or by other descriptors) and have good health
- There is a role for activism (i.e. nothing about us without us) in weight bias reduction efforts
- Narratives/storytelling to convey messages can be powerful, but people with obesity often do not want to share their experiences because of fear of stigma and discrimination
- Changing laws and policies will require patients to step up and be prepared for a long process that is both painful and time-consuming. There is a personal cost from speaking up as an individual living with obesity. It will take time to spark public interest and build confidence among people with obesity to speak up
- Importance of evidence-informed and multi-faceted strategies – there is no single approach to prevent or reduce weight bias, but we have examples of best practices
- Education is important, but it is not enough
- Need for champions to role model behaviour among health and education professionals
- Opportunities for collaboration with groups such as industry and media to bring higher visibility to anti-stigma efforts
- We can learn from others who have led stigma reduction efforts in HIV/AIDS, mental illness, diabetes and the LGBTQ community
- CON-RCO is uniquely positioned to address weight bias in Canada because it is able to bring together a

multitude of different disciplines and perspectives

- CON-RCO can share best practices and the work that is happening around the country to reduce weight bias in health care, education and policy

The objective of the second day of the Summit was to move toward consensus on common messages, strategies, language and/or principles from existing weight bias interventions. Prioritization exercises and consideration of strategies focused on three main sectors: health, education and public policy.

Participants were pre-selected into small working groups by the organizing committee, to ensure appropriate representation of members in one of each of the three sectors. Two groups were assigned to work on each of health, education and public policy sectors.



# OUTCOMES

**TABLE 1.** Small group discussion results from the Health sector. Includes key messages that can be applied to all the audiences as well as key messages specific to the audience. For specific key messages, strategies/tactics as well as outcome measures are listed.

SECTOR: HEALTH	KEY MESSAGES			
AUDIENCE Patients	<p>Applied to all audiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obesity to be treated as a chronic disease</li> <li>• Weight bias and discrimination will not be tolerated</li> </ul>	<p><b>KEY MESSAGE(S)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have the right to be treated like everyone else and not be discriminated against because of your weight</li> <li>• It is okay to talk to your healthcare provider about obesity</li> <li>• Obesity management is not just about eating healthy and moving more</li> </ul>	<p><b>STRATEGIES / TACTICS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage patients through social media (for example: CON-RCO Facebook and Twitter)</li> <li>• Engage patients in public gatherings</li> <li>• Provide education (for example: lunch &amp; learns)</li> <li>• Develop a media campaign</li> </ul>	<p><b>OUTCOME MEASURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many people sign up to CON-RCO social media pages</li> <li>• How many stories have been created and shared</li> </ul>
Policy Makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weight bias should be included in relevant policies that protect against discrimination and exclusion</li> </ul>	<p><b>STRATEGIES / TACTICS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop position statement on weight bias and weight discrimination</li> <li>• Engage with health professional associations to include weight bias and discrimination in codes of conduct/ethics</li> <li>• Develop a standardized obesity care protocol</li> <li>• Engage and educate policy makers on the concept of obesity as a chronic disease</li> <li>• Develop certification checklist for bariatric access and quality care (Accreditation levels)</li> <li>• Address discrimination against health care professionals working in bariatric medicine</li> </ul>	<p><b>OUTCOME MEASURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criteria to be included by Accreditation Canada and Required Organizational Practices (ROP)</li> <li>• CON-RCO can be the platform for sharing of success, best practices and ideas</li> </ul>	
Health Care Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use patient/people first strategies and language</li> <li>• Be compassionate – don't blame the patient</li> <li>• Address the unique needs of patients with obesity</li> <li>• Focus on behaviour and health outcomes</li> </ul>	<p><b>STRATEGIES / TACTICS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change the curriculum for future health professionals</li> <li>• Educate current health professionals (for example, lunch and learns, continuing medical education programs)</li> <li>• Peer mentoring; for example, find champions in primary care to increase buy-in</li> </ul>	<p><b>OUTCOME MEASURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance at education events and sessions</li> <li>• Measure engagement with follow up questionnaires</li> <li>• Number of clinicians and patients that present together</li> <li>• Number of health professionals who join CON-RCO can be the platform for sharing of success, best practices and ideas and become weight bias champions</li> </ul>	

# OUTCOMES

**TABLE 2.** Small group discussion results from the Education sector. Includes key messages that can be applied to all the audiences indicated as well as strategies/tactics and outcome measures.

<b>SECTOR:</b> <b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>KEY MESSAGES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weight bias and discrimination will not be tolerated</li> <li>• Promotion of body positivity and inclusivity</li> </ul>		
<b>AUDIENCE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional associations</li> <li>• School and school districts</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Unions</li> <li>• Universities (pre-service teachers)</li> <li>• Administrators</li> <li>• Provincial and National Organizations</li> </ul>	<b>KEY MESSAGE(S)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discrimination hurts everyone</li> <li>• Obesity should not be the 'hook' for health news or education</li> <li>• Appreciation of diverse body sizes benefits everyone</li> <li>• Decouple health and weight</li> <li>• Promote body inclusivity</li> <li>• Include body size diversity in bias and discrimination policies</li> <li>• Foster resilience in children and youth</li> </ul>	<b>STRATEGIES / TACTICS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create resources, lesson plans, slide banks, links, etc.</li> <li>• Invite collaborators and partners to consult and co-create resources</li> <li>• Leverage existing programs/packages for the inclusion of weight bias reduction information, such as with nutrition, physical activity, and anti-bullying</li> <li>• Develop a coalition by sector to address weight bias</li> <li>• Develop CON-RCO information briefs by sector</li> <li>• Initiate CON-RCO awards for advocates</li> <li>• Identify successes, for example, keep a database</li> <li>• Encourage peer to peer translation of knowledge, resources, and tools</li> <li>• Identify and utilize role models or champions</li> <li>• Develop a vulnerable populations strategy</li> </ul>	<b>OUTCOME MEASURES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people accessing resources</li> <li>• Number of collaborators and partners consulted</li> <li>• Number of tables or settings where weight bias is represented</li> </ul>

**TABLE 3.** Small group discussion results from the Policy sector. Includes key messages that can be applied to all the audiences indicated as well as strategies/tactics and outcome measures.

<b>SECTOR:</b> <b>POLICY</b>	<b>APPLIED TO ALL AUDIENCES:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obesity to be accepted as a chronic disease</li> <li>• Weight bias will not be tolerated</li> </ul>		
<b>AUDIENCE</b> <p>Canadian Obesity Network and others involved in policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal and Provincial civil service</li> <li>• Professional associations and the regulatory bodies that oversee them</li> <li>• Government legislators and administrators</li> <li>• Legal professionals</li> </ul>	<b>KEY MESSAGE(S)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obesity to be accepted as a chronic disease</li> <li>• Addressing weight discrimination is as important as addressing other forms of discrimination</li> <li>• Weight discrimination will not be tolerated</li> </ul>	<b>STRATEGIES / TACTICS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with CON-RCO stakeholders to develop a clear definition of obesity</li> <li>• Work with researchers to synthesize weight bias and discrimination prevalence in Canada</li> <li>• Develop policy against weight discrimination</li> <li>• Engage policy makers in identifying strategies for addressing weight discrimination in their organizations</li> </ul>	<b>OUTCOME MEASURES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CON-RCO has a weight discrimination policy in place to guide other policy makers</li> <li>• Number of weight bias training initiatives</li> <li>• Number of associations incorporating weight discrimination in their policies and the quality of those engagements</li> </ul>

**NEXT STEPS** The recommendations from these discussions will inform CON-RCO's strategic planning and tactics to address weight bias in Canada – stay tuned! Sign up for our newsletter to stay informed about our progress – [www.obesitynetwork.ca/public](http://www.obesitynetwork.ca/public).

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