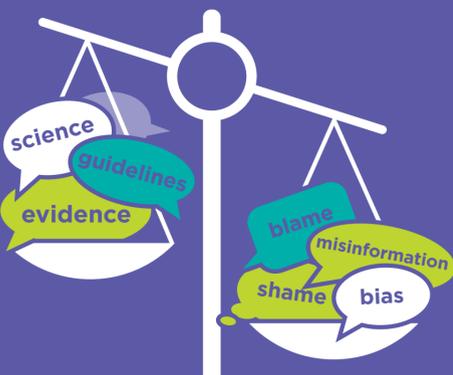


A Time for ACTION ON OBESITY

The Awareness, Care, and Treatment in Obesity Management (ACTION) Study surveyed attitudes toward obesity treatment from three key demographics: people living with obesity (PwO), healthcare providers (HCPs) and employers. Results were published in the journal *Clinical Obesity* in October 2019.*



What are the implications of these results for clinical practice, employers and for individuals living with obesity?

SUMMARY:

Total respondents:
2,545

Adult PwO
2,000
(self-reported BMI >30 kg/m²)

HCPs
395
(physicians and allied healthcare professionals who manage PwO)

Employers
150
(offering health insurance to >20 employees)

FINDING #1

Poorly informed beliefs about the causes and treatments for obesity are preventing persons living with obesity from accessing evidence-based care in the health system.

94% of HCPs think that obesity is a serious chronic disease on par with stroke, depression and others — yet many believe **diet** and **exercise** are effective treatments

Only **47%** of PwO, **52%** of HCPs and **66%** of employers believe the healthcare system is a good resource for obesity management

FINDING #2

Significant barriers to obesity care result from important differences in how each of the three surveyed groups view obesity and their role in addressing it.

82% of PwO acknowledged that they are actively trying to self-manage their obesity — yet **HCPs** and **employers** believe that PwO are not motivated to manage their disease

74% of PwO think managing their obesity is their own responsibility and do not believe HCPs can help them

78% of HCPs said they had a responsibility to support persons living with obesity to manage their disease

Only **50%** of employers thought they are an important partner in obesity management

FINDING #3

Biased beliefs about obesity causes and treatments result in disconnects between healthcare professionals and persons living with obesity.

72% of HCPs said they discussed weight management in their interactions with PwO — but only **50%** of PwO said their HCPs had done so

48% Fewer than half of PwO have received an official HCP diagnosis from an HCP

FINDING #4

Employers don't fully understand their obesity-related health benefits, and those benefits likely don't help persons with obesity manage their disease.

77% of employers thought their wellness programs contributed to effective obesity management — while only **32%** of PwO agreed

86% of employers said they place a high priority on including coverage for obesity treatments

but according to the **2019 Report Card on Access to Obesity Treatments for Adults in Canada** only **8.8%** of Canadians' benefit plans covered anti-obesity medications

FINDING #5

Biased beliefs about obesity are common among healthcare professionals and employers. This prevents persons living with obesity from accessing meaningful treatment and support for their disease.

HCPs: Believe that PwO are not motivated to manage their own weight (**72%**) and demonstrate high levels of weight bias (i.e., negative personal attitudes and views about obesity and people with obesity).

Employers: Believe that weight of employees is completely within employee's control (**47%**) and that PwO could manage their weight if they set their mind to it (**63%**).

PwO: Do not believe that Canadian society or healthcare system support their needs (**83%**). The majority of persons living with obesity (**82%**) are managing their disease on their own and do not believe the healthcare system has a responsibility to help them. This demonstrates a high level of internalized weight bias (i.e., the extent to which individuals living with obesity endorse negative weight-biased beliefs about themselves).

ACTION ITEMS

Obesity Canada makes several recommendations for each of the three survey groups, chief among them:

- PwO**
 - Learn** evidence about obesity causes and treatments and understand that obesity management is a lifelong process that requires medical intervention.
 - Self-advocate** for access to evidence-based treatments and supports with Obesity Canada's online resources.
- HCPs**
 - Treat** obesity as a complex heterogeneous chronic disease. Treatment options need to be individualized.
 - Learn** more about current, evidence-based approaches to treating obesity as a chronic disease using available treatments (new Clinical Practice Guidelines available in 2020).
 - Include** obesity in training program curricula for health professionals.
- Employers**
 - Treat** obesity as a chronic disease and move it out of the lifestyle category within health benefit plans.
 - Offer** meaningful obesity services/coverage that move beyond healthy eating and exercise programs.

* The ACTION Study in Canada is part of a larger study conducted in 12 other countries, and was sponsored by Novo Nordisk. Results of the ACTION Study in Canada were published in *Clinical Obesity*, 2019 Oct;9(5):e12329.

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For Obesity Canada's full ACTION report and recommendations, visit:
www.obesitycanada.ca/ACTION