

# Addressing Mental Health Needs in Weight Recurrence Post-Bariatric Surgery

Anita Sayar<sup>1</sup>, Yeni Bencomo Suarez<sup>2</sup>, Robin Gardiner<sup>3</sup>, William Hilgendorf<sup>3</sup>, Kevin Prather<sup>2</sup>, Jill Nault Connors<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Indiana University School of Medicine; <sup>2</sup>Indiana University School of Medicine, Department of Emergency Medicine; <sup>3</sup>Indiana University School of Medicine, Department of Surgery

## Introduction

- 67-75% of bariatric surgery patients regain  $\geq 20\%$  of maximum weight lost by 6 years post-op<sup>1,2</sup>
- ~70% of post-surgery patients experience symptoms of anxiety and depression<sup>3</sup>
- **Gap:** mental health remains undertreated in this population; limited research on integrating mental health care in bariatric clinical care post-surgery
- **Pilot study to evaluate the effects of a mental health intervention program on anxiety, depression and weight loss motivation in bariatric patients**

## Methods

- **Population:** Preliminary data from bariatric surgery patients (n=12)  $\geq 2$  years post-op, either  $>10\%$  weight regain or non-responder, and screened positively for depression or anxiety
- **Intervention:**
  - Evidence-based, self-help internet CBT course for anxiety and depression (6 lessons, 3 months)
  - Bimonthly peer support group sessions
  - Off-week 1:1 check-ins with peer support specialist
  - Asynchronous support via optional private Facebook Group
- **Data Analysis:** Qualitative analysis using conventional content methodology from peer field notes taken during support group sessions

## Results



**Figure 1. Word Cloud: Visualizing Categories from Support Group Sessions**

Support group field notes reflecting patient experiences were coded into 4 categories. Word size is scaled to the frequency a category was mentioned in support group sessions. Related texts are color-coded within each category. Human brain graphic (left) represents primary category, adjacent quote bubbles (right) reflect 3 additional categories derived from comments.

## Discussion

- **Findings demonstrated a negative effect of depression and anxiety symptoms on lifestyle behaviors, primarily manifesting as overeating and leading to weight recurrence**
- **Depression, anxiety symptom onset preceded rather than followed weight recurrence, and was commonly attributed to the death of a family member**
- Prior literature demonstrates improved short-term mental health outcomes, but no weight changes at 1 year with CBT<sup>4</sup>
- **Limitations:** Preliminary data on small sample, this limits transferability of findings

## Conclusion

- **Depression and anxiety negatively impact lifestyle modification efforts, necessitating a further call for mental health treatment in bariatric patients**
- **Clinical implications:** iCBT program with support groups has the potential to improve access to mental health care in the bariatric population

## References

1. King, W.C., Hinerman, A., Belle, S., Wahed, A., Courcoulas, A. Comparison of the Performance of Common Measures of Weight Regain After Bariatric Surgery for Association With Clinical Outcomes. *Jama*, 2018. 320(15): p. 1560-1569. doi:10.1001/jama.2018.14433
2. Lauti, M., M. Kularatna, A.G. Hill, and A.D. McCormick, Weight Regain Following Sleeve Gastrectomy-a Systematic Review. *Obes Surg*, 2016. 26(6): p. 1326-34. doi:10.1007/s11695-016-2152-x
3. Alyahya RA, Alnujaidi MA. Prevalence and Outcomes of Depression After Bariatric Surgery: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Cureus*. 2022 Jun 4;14(6):e25651. doi: 10.7759/cureus.25651
4. Sockalingam S, Leung SE, Ma C, Tomlinson G, Hawa R, Wnuk S, Jackson T, Urbach D, Okrainec A, Brown J, Sandre D, Cassin SE. Efficacy of Telephone-Based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Weight Loss, Disordered Eating, and Psychological Distress After Bariatric Surgery: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2023 Aug 1;6(8):e2327099. doi: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.27099