
Time to Rename Obesity?



A recent study conducted by researchers at University College Cork (UCC) and the University of Galway suggests that changing how we discuss obesity is necessary to enhance public understanding of the disease. The researchers propose that the term "obesity" should be renamed to facilitate better comprehension among the public and policymakers, ultimately leading to advancements in its treatment and prevention.

The study is published in the journal *Obesity Reviews*. It highlights the confusion surrounding the term "obesity," which currently encompasses both the disease of obesity, body mass index (BMI) values or a combination of the two.

The researchers believe the term needs to be re-evaluated because it does not accurately portray the complex nature of the disease, which involves environmental, genetic, physiological, behavioural, and developmental factors. It limits its focus to body weight or BMI.

Recently, there has been a surge in the demand for new appetite-control medications. However, individuals with obesity are often deprioritised in the queue due to the mistaken belief that they require the medication less urgently than patients with diabetes. The researchers suggest that employing clearer terminology could help rectify this disparity. For example, semaglutide is approved as a treatment for obesity and diabetes. However, there is a stigmatising notion that individuals with obesity are using this drug as an effortless way out without focusing on a healthy diet and lifestyle. This is not the case. These drugs do not eliminate the need for behavioural changes or make it easy. They help individuals living with obesity adopt healthier lifestyles.

Study researchers emphasise that the focus should be on the underlying pathophysiology instead of fixating on body size. It is important to understand that treatment is not optional or superficial for individuals afflicted by the disease of obesity. Introducing a different diagnostic term, such as 'adiposity-based chronic disease,' could better communicate the nature of this illness while avoiding the confusion and stigma associated with the term 'obesity,' as the term has today become synonymous with body size.

Overall, the researchers conclude that it is time to clarify the definition of obesity. The focus should be on fostering healthy food environments and providing appropriate care for individuals with chronic metabolic diseases. Hopefully, this new research will reinforce the idea that the objective is enabling people to lead healthy lives rather than striving for universal thinness.

Source: [University of College Cork](#)

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