

Obesity kills: doctors call for better training for effective care



With European Obesity Day taking place on May 19, General Practitioners (GPs) across Europe are calling for increased and improved training on obesity for more effective patient care.

More than 700 GPs from seven European countries took part in a survey that revealed nearly one third do not feel informed enough about the complexities of obesity to best support patients. Less than half feel confident that they can offer advice on weight loss and fighting obesity.

The survey, conducted for the European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO), also showed that 83 percent of GPs say they need more training on the causes, consequences and treatment of obesity. Nearly half (43 percent) said that training on obesity totalled less than four hours during their entire medical training.

EASO is responsible for research into obesity. As the voice of the European obesity community, it represents scientists, healthcare practitioners, physicians, public health experts and patients.

“Despite the growing epidemic and the burden it places on healthcare systems, it is clear that GP’s are given very little training on obesity,” said EASO President, Professor Hermann Toplak.

Obesity: a serious health threat

Despite the low level of awareness on obesity complexities and influence on health, 95 percent of surveyed GPs said they viewed the condition as being a serious threat to health while 38 percent regarded it as “very dangerous”.

The survey figures align with the World Health Organization’s view that obesity is “one of the greatest public health challenges of the 21st century”. The prevalence of obesity has tripled in numerous European countries over the past four decades.

GPs see obesity as the fifth most serious threat to health. Moreover, three of the top four conditions – cancer, cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes – are frequently directly connected to obesity. Doctors agree that a more effective approach to obesity treatment would lighten the burden on the healthcare system since the condition of being overweight underlies these diseases.

Only three countries in Europe, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain, classify obesity as a disease although 83 percent of GPs agreed that the condition should be approached as such.

Other key findings included:

- 58 percent of GP’s patients are overweight or obese.
- Nearly three quarters of GPs see insufficient exercise as being the cause of obesity.
- 91 percent of GPs think bariatric surgery is an effective treatment to help obese patients lose weight.

“More effort needs to be made to improve healthcare professionals’ understanding of obesity and comprehensive treatment approaches that can be delivered as part of patient care,” Toplak said.

Source: [European Obesity Day](#)

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