

Patient-Doctor Relationship May Influence Bariatric Surgery Decision

Patients who trusted their surgeon were more likely to undergo bariatric surgery.

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A study published in [JAMA Network Open](#) found that the degree to which patients trust and are satisfied with their physicians may factor into their decision to undergo [bariatric weight loss surgery](#).

A low-risk procedure, bariatric surgery can reduce the risk for serious health issues linked to [obesity](#), such as [type 2 diabetes](#), [fatty liver disease](#) and [hypertension](#), yet only about half of eligible and referred patients follow through with the procedure.

UT Southwestern and UTHealth School of Public Health conducted the multicenter study and noted in a [news release](#) that Latino and non-Hispanic Black patients are among the least likely to utilize bariatric surgery.

In the news release, study coauthor Jaime Almandoz, MD, associate professor of internal medicine in the Division of Endocrinology and medical director of UT Southwestern's Weight Wellness Program, emphasized that patient-physician relationships "can have a powerful influence on the health care decision made by people with severe obesity and related complications."

"This is an important modifiable risk factor for widening disparities in bariatric surgery completion," he continued.

According to Almandoz, obesity affects over 40% of adults in the United States, and bariatric surgery is the most effective in treating severe obesity. "Data show that, beyond improvement in body weight, people who undergo bariatric surgery are more likely to have a better quality of life and greater life expectancy than those who do not," he said.

For the study, researchers wanted to explore the relationship between patients and their physicians to determine whether it played a role in their choice to undergo bariatric surgery. Almandoz and colleagues presented a patient satisfaction questionnaire to 408 patients who were referred to bariatric surgery clinics or a medical obesity program. Of the 408 patients, 124 completed the surgery. Using the questionnaire, researchers reviewed patients' relationship with their bariatric surgeon to determine which factors influenced their choice to have the surgery or

not.

Major factors associated with completed surgery included patient's perception of the physician, how well the physician's office was known to perform the surgery, communication, accessibility and convenience.

Study authors note that additional studies are required to establish effective strategies to improve patient satisfaction, particularly among ethnically diverse patients who are eligible for bariatric surgery.

"Our findings suggest that focusing on these primary factors and building trust with the patient may help to increase the utilization of bariatric surgery for treating obesity," Almandoz said.

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