

## Surgery as option for diabetics

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Surgery for weight-loss control just got taken another notch more seriously by the medical community as a legitimate treatment for certain physiological conditions, and not as just some way to get thin.

And while grateful for this latest shot in the arm, bariatric surgeons in residence at local hospitals say it's nothing they haven't known all along.

In a joint statement endorsed by 45 international professional organizations, diabetes clinicians and researchers are urging that metabolic (or weight loss) surgery be recommended or considered as a treatment option for certain categories of people with diabetes, including people who are mildly obese and fail to respond to conventional treatment. The Statement and Clinical Guidelines will be published in the June issue of *Diabetes Care*.

"The reason this is a big deal is because, traditionally, diabetes was always managed with medicine," said Dr. Melissa Bagloo, medical director for the Center for Metabolic and Weight Loss Surgery at The Valley Hospital in Ridgewood.

"Patients would often have a hard time maintaining good glycemic control, despite being on best medical management. Bariatric surgery has far exceeded

what medicine can do in terms of glucose control for diabetics," she said.

The new guidelines emerged from the Second Diabetes Surgery Summit, an international conference held late last year in London, jointly organized by the American Diabetes Association, the International Diabetes Federation, Diabetes U.K., Chinese Diabetes Society and Diabetes India.

The goal of the summit was to develop global guidelines to inform clinicians and policy makers about the benefits and limitations of metabolic surgery for type 2 diabetics.

In the report, metabolic surgery is defined as the use of gastrointestinal operations, originally designed to induce weight loss (bariatric surgery), with the primary intent to treat type 2 diabetes and obesity. These procedures remove parts of the stomach or reroute the small intestine. Many people who undergo metabolic surgery experience major improvements in glycemia, as well as a reduction in cardiovascular risk factors, making it a highly effective treatment for type 2 diabetes and a highly effective means of diabetes prevention.

One of the reasons a regimen of medication and diet doesn't always work is that they can be too restrictive, Bagloo said. "The diet the patient would have to maintain is often very strict. It is often too difficult to be compliant with. And there are other factors where medications can help, but the degree of the disease may limit the ability of the medications to optimally manage the glycemic control," Bagloo said.

"Diabetes is pretty prevalent in our country, with lots of conse-

quences if it's poorly controlled. The benefit of this recommendation is really to patients. Metabolic surgery is being embraced and looked at more and more as an option to manage multiple medical issues. The effects and promising outcomes are now being recognized, not just by surgeons but by the medical community as a whole.

"We as surgeons have seen the improvement in diabetes for many years. It's just that now the medical community is recognizing those benefits as well."

Last month, Bagloo publicly addressed reports of a new study showing that crash-dieting like the kind done on "The Biggest Loser" TV show can actually slow a person's metabolism down to the point where they inevitably gain more weight than they carried to start with, regardless of diet and exercise.

She noted that the findings were more proof that sometimes dieting and exercise aren't enough for morbidly obese people – surgery is the answer.

"Hormones change after bariatric surgery. Gut hormones that improve after the operation ... these are all hormones that are released from the bowel or other tissue, based on what you eat. They are involved in hunger and satiety and sugar control and other aspects of your hunger mechanisms," she said. "We don't see those kinds of hormonal changes after people do diet and exercise. We do see those changes with the surgery. It changes your body's reaction to food."

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