



# Obesity Stigma and Bias

Sharon M. Fruh, PhD, FNP, Joe Nadglowski, BS,  
Heather R. Hall, PhD, NNP, Sara L. Davis, MSN, Errol D. Crook, MD,  
and Kimberly Zlomke, PhD

## ABSTRACT

Overweight and obesity are escalating in epidemic proportions in the United States. Individuals with overweight and obesity are often reluctant to seek medical help, not only for weight reduction but also for any health issue because of perceived provider discrimination. Providers who are biased against individuals with obesity can hinder our nation's effort to effectively fight the obesity epidemic. By addressing weight bias in the provider setting, individuals affected by obesity may be more likely to engage in a meaningful and productive discussion of weight. Providers need to be the go-to source for obesity-focused information on new and emerging treatments.

**Keywords:** media and weight bias, obesity bias, obesity stigma, provider bias, weight discrimination, weight stigmatization

© 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Sharon M. Fruh, PhD, FNP-BC, is a professor at the University of South Alabama in Mobile and can be reached at [sfruh@southalabama.edu](mailto:sfruh@southalabama.edu). Joe Nadglowski is the president/CEO of Obesity Action Coalition in Tampa, FL. Heather R. Hall, PhD, RNC, NNP, is a professor and associate dean for academic affairs at the University of South Alabama. Sara L. Davis, MSN, RN, is an instructor at the Division of Nursing at Spring Hill College in Mobile, AL. Errol D. Crook, MD, is an Abraham A. Mitchell professor and chair at the Department of Internal Medicine at the University of South Alabama. Kimberly Zlomke, PhD, is an assistant professor at the Department of Psychology at the University of South Alabama. Dr. Fruh serves on the Novo Nordisk Obesity Speakers Bureau. In compliance with national ethical guidelines, the authors report no relationships with business or industry that would pose a conflict of interest.

Overweight and obesity are escalating in epidemic proportions in the United States.<sup>1</sup> As the rates of overweight and obesity rise, weight discrimination in America has increased by 66% over the past decade and is

equivocal to racial discrimination.<sup>2,3</sup> Perceived provider weight discrimination often causes individuals with overweight and obesity to be reluctant to seek medical help, not only for weight reduction but also for any health-related problems.<sup>4-6</sup>

This CE learning activity is designed to augment the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of nurse practitioners and assist in their recognition of obesity stigma and bias.

**At the conclusion of this activity, the participant will be able to:**

- Explain why obesity bias increased and impacted quality of health care
- Describe how provider bias and patients' perceptions of biased care influences health care outcomes
- Identify strategies/resources to reduce health provider obesity bias

The authors, reviewers, editors, and nurse planners all report no financial relationships that would pose a conflict of interest.

The authors do not present any off-label or non-FDA-approved recommendations for treatment.

This activity has been awarded 1.0 Contact Hours of which 0 credits are in the area of Pharmacology. The activity is valid for CE credit until September 1, 2018.

To receive CE credits, read the article and answer each question. Required minimum passing score is 70%. Applicants who prefer to mail the test answers and evaluation should send them and a processing fee check for \$10 (made out to Elsevier) to PO Box 1461, American Fork, UT 84003. Applicants who want to take the test online may do so at [www.npjjournal.org/cme/home](http://www.npjjournal.org/cme/home) for a \$5 fee.

This educational activity is provided by Nurse Practitioner Alternatives™.

NPA™ is accredited as a provider of continuing nursing education by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

Accreditation does not imply endorsement by the provider, Elsevier, or ANCC of recommendations or any commercial products displayed or discussed in conjunction with the educational activity.

Providers who are biased against individuals with obesity can hinder our nation's effort to effectively fight the obesity epidemic.<sup>7,8</sup> Bias against those with obesity appears to be socially acceptable and is reinforced by the media.<sup>8-10</sup>

In order to effectively facilitate change in weight bias, providers must identify and overcome their own implicit and explicit weight-based biases. Providers are regarded as the go-to sources for obesity-focused information on new and emerging treatments; they also have the responsibility to communicate to patients and the public that obesity is a disease that needs to be addressed in a respectful and compassionate manner. The purpose of this article is to raise awareness of health provider weight bias and stigma and offer strategies that increase sensitivity and compassion to individuals with obesity in an effort to provide the best possible health care.

### CONSEQUENCES OF WEIGHT BIAS

Experts suggest that preventing weight stigmatization and bias is essential to effective obesity treatment efforts.<sup>7,8</sup> Shaming individuals with obesity is not an effective tool to motivate them to lose weight because weight-based stigmatization can hamper weight loss outcomes among adults in weight loss programs.<sup>11-13</sup> A research study with women found that individuals who internalized negative weight stigma reported more episodes of binge eating and were less likely to diet.<sup>13</sup> This finding contradicts the notion that weight stigma and bias encourage individuals to lose weight.<sup>13</sup>

### MASS MEDIA AND THE PERPETUATION OF WEIGHT BIAS

Mass media has stigmatized obese individuals.<sup>14</sup> A review of research over the past 15 years related to weight bias in media has reported that many media sources such as animated cartoons, movies, situational comedies, books, weight loss programming, news coverage, and YouTube videos have represented individuals who are overweight and obese in a stigmatizing manner.<sup>14</sup>

Mass media has often promoted weight stigma as socially acceptable.<sup>8,10,14</sup> A study that conducted a content analysis of news images found that the majority of images presented portray obese

individuals in a negative manner.<sup>10</sup> The media commonly represents individuals who are overweight and obese as headless figures who are inappropriately clothed and eating.<sup>10</sup> A recent study found that positive media images of individuals with obesity had an affirmative impact on reducing weight-based stigmatizing perceptions held by the public.<sup>15</sup>

### HEALTH CARE PROVIDER BIAS

Health providers need to be aware of the fact that most individuals who struggle with overweight and obesity have often attempted many measures to lose weight.<sup>16</sup> Obesity is caused by many influences such as genetics and environmental factors.<sup>17</sup> Lifestyle changes can be especially difficult in certain environments.

People with obesity often face ongoing weight discrimination and bullying.<sup>14</sup> Research has identified that obesity bias is prevalent in health care settings.<sup>18</sup>

A recent study surveyed 358 nurse practitioners (NPs) at a national conference regarding their attitudes and beliefs regarding individuals with obesity. The study found that NPs reported negative beliefs and attitudes toward patients who are overweight and obese.<sup>19</sup> The participants of this study perceived individuals with overweight or obesity to be not as good or successful as others, not fit for marriage, messy, and not as healthy.<sup>19</sup> A British study of 398 nurses found that only 2.3% had provided information to a group related to an intervention for managing obesity.<sup>20</sup> This study identified that very few respondents indicated they had training in obesity management and reported they spent 5% of their clinical time in obesity management. This study also found that the nurses' own body mass index (BMI) was statistically related to their views of obesity; the higher the nurses' BMI, the lower their negative perception of obesity.<sup>20</sup>

A survey by Jay et al<sup>21</sup> with 250 physicians found that 40% reported a negative reaction toward a patient who was obese. This study found that 56% of providers felt they were qualified to treat obesity, and 46% felt they were successful in treating patients with obesity.<sup>21</sup> The majority of the physicians reported they felt frustrated when treating patients with obesity.<sup>21</sup> A study with 255 physicians found that those who had a high percentage of patients with extreme obesity were less likely to recommend

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/2660342>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/2660342>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)