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A Global Health Crisis

Announcer:

Welcome to CME on ReachMD. This episode is part of our MinuteCE curriculum.

Prior to beginning the activity, please be sure to review the faculty and commercial support disclosure statements as well as the learning objectives.

Dr. Ryan:

This is CME on ReachMD and I am Dr. Donna Ryan. I'm here to talk to you about obesity as a global health crisis.

The worldwide prevalence of obesity has tripled since 1975. That's less than 50 years. So today, in 2024, there are more than 880 million adults and 159 million children aged 5 to 19 who are diagnosed with obesity. That's more than 1 billion people in the world.

The problem here is not just that obesity is a problem of increased body size; obesity is increased excess abnormal body fat that drives risk for all of the chronic diseases that are the public health challenges of the 21st century. So obesity is a driver of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, 13 types of cancers, and many, many other complications. So what's going on here is that under the pressure of an obesogenic environment, many of us are susceptible to weight gain. And once we gain weight, it is very difficult to lose weight because our bodies defend the highest fat mass.

And when we exceed our ability to store fat in healthy places, we store fat in sites that are unhealthy, visceral adiposity and increased adiposity, increased fat stores in organs and other tissues. And this gives rise to the CKM syndrome, the cardiovascular, kidney, and metabolic syndrome, that's root cause is this excess abnormal body fat located in the visceral compartment and in different ectopic tissues.

So the reason obesity is a chronic disease is because once we gain weight, our bodies resist losing weight. There's a whole biologic and physiologic process that protects our highest fat mass. And when we try to lose weight, when we enter negative energy balance, the body's defense mechanisms spring into action and we see increased hunger, decreased satiety, increased susceptibility to eating these highly palatable foods, and we also see a reduction in metabolic rate. All of this drives weight regain. It makes it difficult to lose weight, and it drives weight regain. So what we see across the lifespan is this ever-increasing body weight. That's why obesity is a chronic disease.

So let me sum it up. What I'd like you to take away from this are that many factors drive weight gain in susceptible individuals. We are in a worldwide epidemic of obesity. When we exceed our ability to store fat in healthy depots, we accumulate it in unhealthy depots in the visceral and ectopic compartments. This excess abnormal body fat is driving the risk for cardiometabolic, liver, and renal complications, and those are the drivers of the chronic diseases, the public health challenge of this century. The body's biology resists weight loss, and it promotes weight regain. That's why obesity is a chronic disease.

So I'd like to thank you for listening to me about the worldwide epidemic of obesity. I hope this information was helpful for you.

Announcer:

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