

Position Statement of the Swiss Society of Endocrinology (SGED/SSSED) on recent public debates questioning the reimbursement of obesity medication

With endorsement by

- **The Swiss Multidisciplinary Obesity Society (SMOB)**
- **The Swiss Obesity Alliance**
- **Association for Obesity in Children and Adults**

Obesity is a complex endocrine-metabolic disease and a critical gateway to the growing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). These include hypertension, dyslipidemia, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic kidney disease, malignancies, mental health disorders, neurodegenerative conditions, and osteoarthritis. In Switzerland, according to the 2022 Swiss Health Survey, 43% of the population aged 15 and over was overweight or obese; this corresponds to 31% of overweight people and 12% of people with obesity, a prevalence that results in significant health care costs and productivity losses (1).

Lifestyle modification – encompassing diet, physical activity, and behavioral therapy – remains the foundation of obesity management and must be integrated into all treatment plans. However, it is often not possible to achieve or sustain the necessary weight reduction or metabolic control with lifestyle intervention alone.

In Switzerland, bariatric surgery has been offered for decades to patients with a BMI ≥ 35 kg/m² and has proven effective in achieving and maintaining significant weight loss. It also reduces obesity-related complications and extends life expectancy. However, although bariatric surgery provides an effective solution for individuals with severe obesity or major metabolic complications, it alone cannot meet the increasing need for long-term weight and metabolic health management.

In recent years, new endocrine medications for obesity have emerged, with robust clinical evidence demonstrating benefits for weight reduction, metabolic improvement, functional enhancement, and the prevention of obesity-related diseases including cardio-renal complications (2-5). In recognition of these proven benefits, the World Health Organization and leading professional societies now endorse these pharmacotherapies as essential medicines for the treatment of obesity and type 2 diabetes (6-7).

The Swiss Society of Endocrinology and Diabetology (SGED/SSSED) acknowledges the need for ongoing scientific evaluation and long-term research regarding the benefits and safety of these novel endocrine therapies, along with the requirement for a thorough evaluation of the cost-benefit ratio. As the national professional society responsible for education, training, and research in the field, the SGED/SSSED emphasizes that all medical treatments – including those approved for obesity – must be assessed according to the highest scientific standards.

Unfortunately, several recent commentaries on anti-obesity medication reimbursement have demonstrated a concerning departure from an evidence-based discourse, perpetuating harmful stigmas against individuals with obesity (8-11).

The SGED/SSSED strongly asserts that all evaluations of the costs and benefits of medical treatments must be unrestrictedly grounded in robust scientific evidence – comprehensively considering both direct treatment expenses and the broader healthcare burden of comorbidities resulting from obesity. To ensure true objectivity, these assessments should always be conducted independently by qualified experts in health economics and chronic disease.

The SGED/SSSED urges policymakers to partner with scientific societies through structured processes, ensuring transparency and evidence-based decisions. We are committed to foster a dialogue based on facts, respecting equity, avoiding stigmatization, and prioritizing patient health and dignity of people suffering from obesity.

This statement serves as a plea urging policy makers, health care economists, providers, insurers, and patient advocates to unite for a dialogue addressing this significant public health problem.

Endorsed by:

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