



Marc Bessler, MD

## Letter from the Director

December 2018

Dear Reader,

October 11, 2018 was World Obesity Day, an annual event to raise awareness of this global epidemic.

This same month, the Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation documented a worsening of this [obesity crisis](#) here in the US, with several states recording increases in adults who are significantly overweight and suffering from related conditions like diabetes.

In other news, [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) reported a 43 percent increase in the death rate from liver cancer since 2000, citing the obesity epidemic as the main cause.

An editorial in [Military Times](#) noted that the U.S. Armed Forces spends more than \$1.5 billion a year treating obesity-related medical conditions and replacing unfit soldiers. And according to the Pentagon, by 2020, only 2 out of 10 young men may meet the army's health criteria.

Finally, it's not just the poor who are affected by obesity. Tamar Haspel, a [Washington Post](#) food columnist has found that most overweight people fall into the middle-income category. Americans, as a whole, she said, are "simply ill-equipped to deal with a landscape of cheap, convenient, calorie-dense foods that have been specifically engineered to be irresistible," and this "inability to navigate our food environment is near universal."

While obesity continues to be a major problem, we do have some good news for those who need to lose a significant amount of weight. A growing body of evidence shows that minimally-invasive weight loss surgery can help those struggling with obesity make important changes in lifestyle and eating habits, and greatly improve their overall health.

Researchers have just found that bariatric surgery has significant benefits for patients with severe obesity and type 2 diabetes. After a weight loss procedure, this group had less neuropathy (nerve pain or numbness, usually in their hands and feet); less nephropathy (damage to the kidneys) and less retinopathy (damage to the blood vessels in the back of the eye).

Weight loss surgery can dramatically reduce the risk of developing hormone related cancers, affecting the breast, the uterine lining, and the prostate. More on this below.

Our Q&A focuses on the importance of one-on-one counseling and patient support groups, proven to help patients meet their weight loss goals. In this issue, our social worker Lauren Skolnick discusses the psychological challenges patients face at different stages of treatment. She shares tips for understanding the why, when and how of your eating habits, and offers good advice on how to prepare for parties and family gatherings around the holidays.

To good health,

Marc Bessler, MD, FACS

Director, The Center for Metabolic and Weight Loss Surgery

[www.columbiasurgery.org/weight-loss](http://www.columbiasurgery.org/weight-loss)

## Q & A

### **Weight Loss Surgery: Getting Help with Lifestyle Changes**

If you're struggling with obesity, losing weight is a lifelong proposition. And it's not something you can do alone.

"Studies show that a combination of peer support and counseling helps patients meet their long-term weight loss goals," says Lauren Skolnick, a licensed clinical social worker who helped build the behavioral health program at [Columbia's Center for Metabolic and Weight Loss Surgery](http://www.columbiasurgery.org/weight-loss). We recently spoke with her about the psychological issues that arise before and after a weight loss procedure – and why having a place to talk honestly and openly about these challenges is so important.

[Read more](#)

## **Bariatric Surgery Reduces Complications for Type 2 Diabetics**

*Medscape*

Patients with diabetes and severe obesity who had bariatric surgery were half as likely to develop certain complications of diabetes than those who did not have surgery, according to a study from Kaiser Permanente published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Investigators looked at 4,000 patients who had bariatric surgery and found they had a nearly 60 percent decrease in the five-year incidence of microvascular disease – including neuropathy, nephropathy, and retinopathy – compared to of 11,000 patients receiving standard diabetes care.

"Such a remarkable decrease in microvascular complications has rarely been demonstrated by any form of diabetes therapy," wrote Philip R. Schauer, MD, professor of surgery at Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine, Ohio who noted that "bariatric surgery should now be considered as an effective [type 2 diabetes] treatment not only to improve hyperglycemia but also to prevent the complications" linked to worsening of diabetes and death.

[Read more](#)

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## **Bariatric Surgery Slashes Risk of Hormone-Related Cancers**

*MedPage Today*

Patients who had bariatric surgery were five- times less likely to develop cancers of the breast, the lining of the uterus, and the prostate, according to a study published in the *British Journal of Surgery*.

Gastric bypass surgery was associated with the largest risk reduction for all three hormone-related cancers, followed by sleeve gastrectomy, and gastric banding. Researchers sum up these findings this way: Those who lose weight live longer.

Previous research from McGill University Health Center in Canada showed

that bariatric surgery significantly reduced the number of physician/hospital visits for patients with obesity with any cancer diagnosis.

"We used to wait for 5 years after a cancer diagnosis to perform bariatric surgery," said Dr. Samer G. Mattar, MD, president of the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS). "Now we operate right after treatment for acute cancer, especially in patients with breast or endometrial cancer."

[Read more](#)

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## **Obesity Doubles Colon Cancer Risk for Younger Women**

*HealthDay News*

Cases of colon cancer have been declining for people 50 and older, yet they're increasing for younger Americans. Researchers think that widening waistlines may be one reason why.

According to a study highlighted in the October 11 *JAMA Oncology*, women aged 20 to 49 who were overweight or obese had up to twice the risk for colon cancer before age 50, compared to normal-weight peers.

"Our findings really highlight the importance of maintaining a healthy weight, beginning in early adulthood, for the prevention of early onset colorectal cancer," said study co-author Yin Cao, assistant professor of surgery at Washington University in St. Louis.

[Read more](#)

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## **Obesity, Diabetes During Pregnancy Linked to Children with Psychiatric Disorders**

*Reuters*

A study highlighted in the journal *Pediatrics* suggests pregnant women with severe obesity and diabetes are more likely to have children with autism, ADHD and other psychiatric disorders than women without these health issues.

Mothers who had obesity and pre-existing diabetes were more than six times as likely as women of normal weight to have children with ADHD,

behavioral issues or autism and more than four times as likely to have children with emotional disorders, researchers found.

[Read more](#)

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## **With Obesity Epidemic, Liver Cancer Deaths Surge**

*MedPage Today*

The death rate for liver cancer increased 43 percent since 2000, and the obesity epidemic is the main cause, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Over a 17 year period, men are twice as likely as women lose their lives to this disease.

Non-alcoholic associated steatohepatitis (NASH) and diabetes, both linked to obesity, are the most important risk factors for liver cancer in the U.S. today.

[Read more](#)

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## **Modified Fasting May Reduce Body Fat**

*Healio*

A new approach to eating that pushes breakfast later and dinner earlier, help people lose body fat, according to a study published in the *Journal of Nutritional Science*. Researchers explain how this form of intermittent fasting may help people to lose weight.

[Read more](#)

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## **Who Gets Bariatric Surgery?**

The average patient is a woman between 35 and 50, who eats healthy food, goes to the gym—and is still 100 pounds overweight. Willpower isn't everything.

Watch this [video](#) and learn how bariatric surgery can help you to reclaim your life.



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The [Center for Metabolic and Weight Loss Surgery](#) has offices in several convenient locations in the tri-state area. [You can make an appointment here.](#)

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