

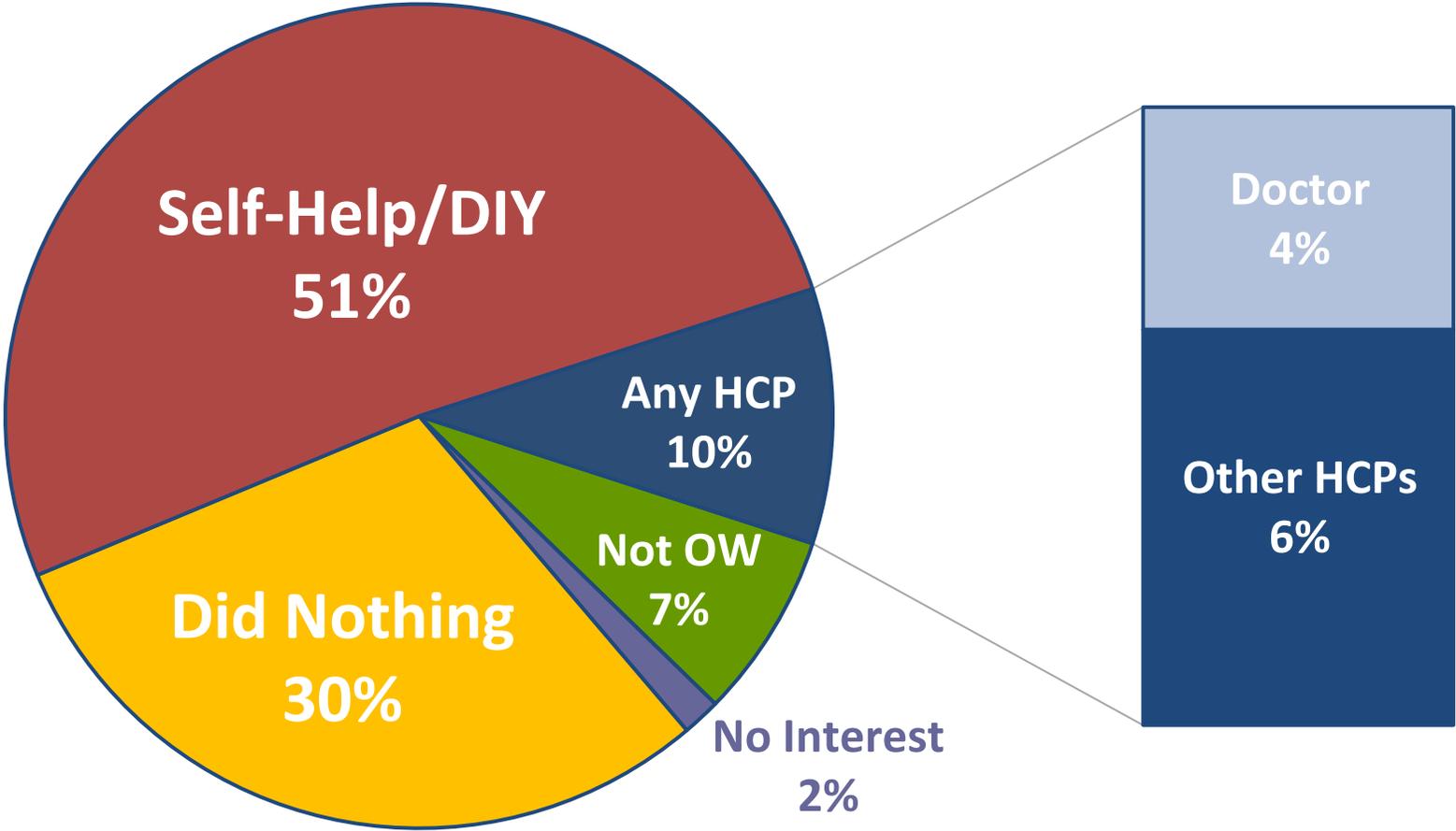


# DIY Is the Dominant Paradigm for Obesity Care

Ted Kyle, RPh, MBA

November 13, 2024

# Only 10% of People with Obesity Get Help from Medical Professionals



# Bias and Stigma Drive the Dominant Role for DIY Obesity Care

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## Bias: a lack of objectivity

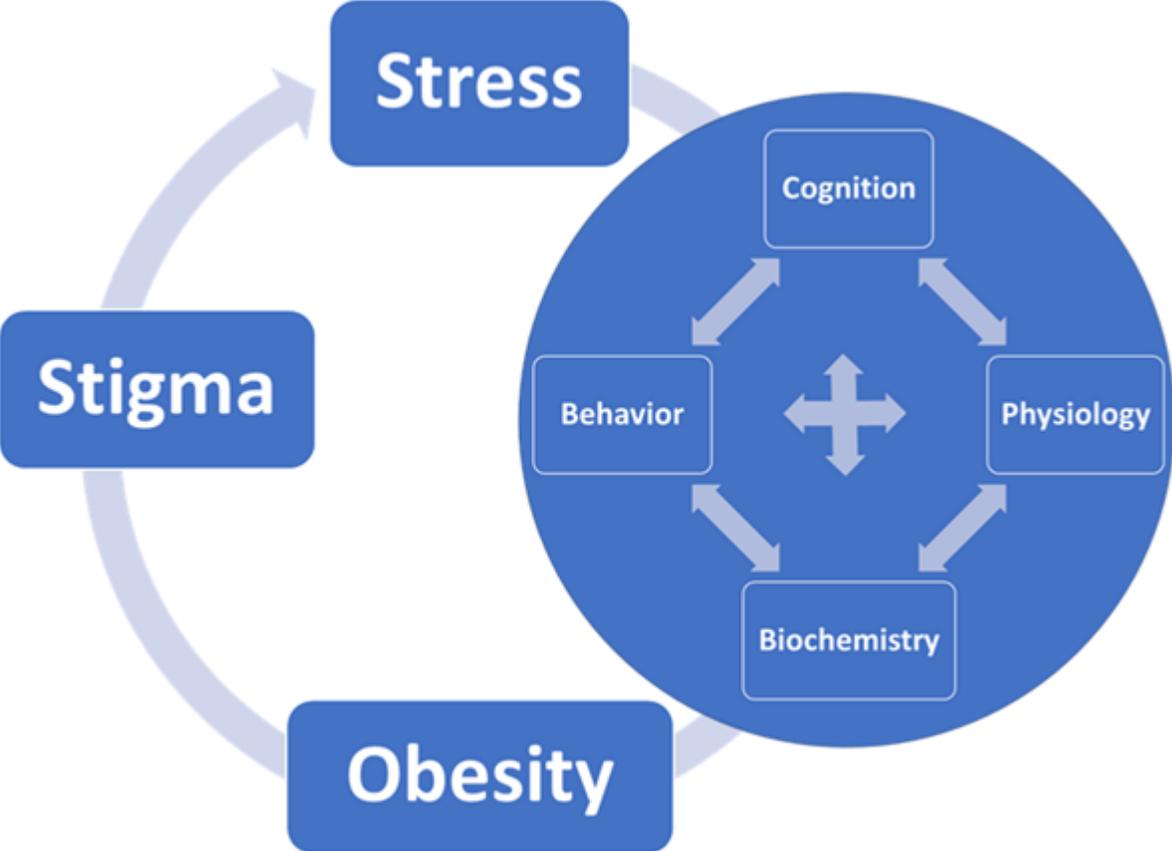
- About obesity itself
- Toward people living with obesity

## Stigma: devaluation of a person

- Self stigma results when people repeatedly encounter bias
- People internalize the bias they experience and devalue themselves
- Self-stigma impairs health

# Bias and Stigma Cause Real Harm

*Pathways from stress to obesity*



# Implicit Bias Has Grown, Even as Explicit Bias Became Unacceptable

Dimension	Explicit Bias Trend 2007-2020	Implicit Bias Trend 2007-2020
Sexuality	↓	↓
Race	↓	↓
Skin Tone	↓	↓
Age	↓	↔
Disability	↓	↔
Weight	↓	↑ ↔

*Explicit bias no longer goes unnoticed, but implicit bias is sneaky and prevalent*

Source: Charlesworth & Banaji, 2022, *Psychological Science*

# Because of Bias in Healthcare, People with Obesity Avoid It

*"Let's confront the **elephant** in the room. Healthcare policy should promote **personal responsibility**, rather than encourage free riders. In America we are free to **overeat** and **under-exercise** but we have **no right** to make **innocent bystanders pay** for the consequences."*

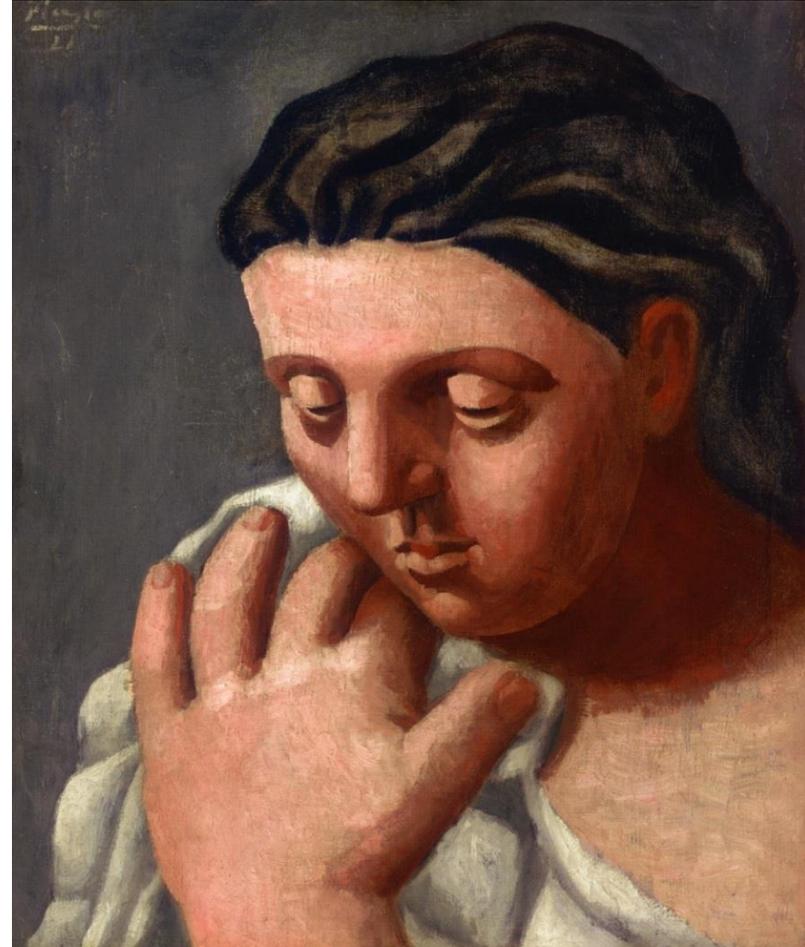
– Marilyn M. Singleton, MD, JD  
Past President, Association of American Physicians and Surgeons  
Jan 11, 2020



Elephants, photograph by Patrick Bouquet, CC-BY-NC-ND 2.0

# Implicit Bias Is So Common That It Goes Unnoticed

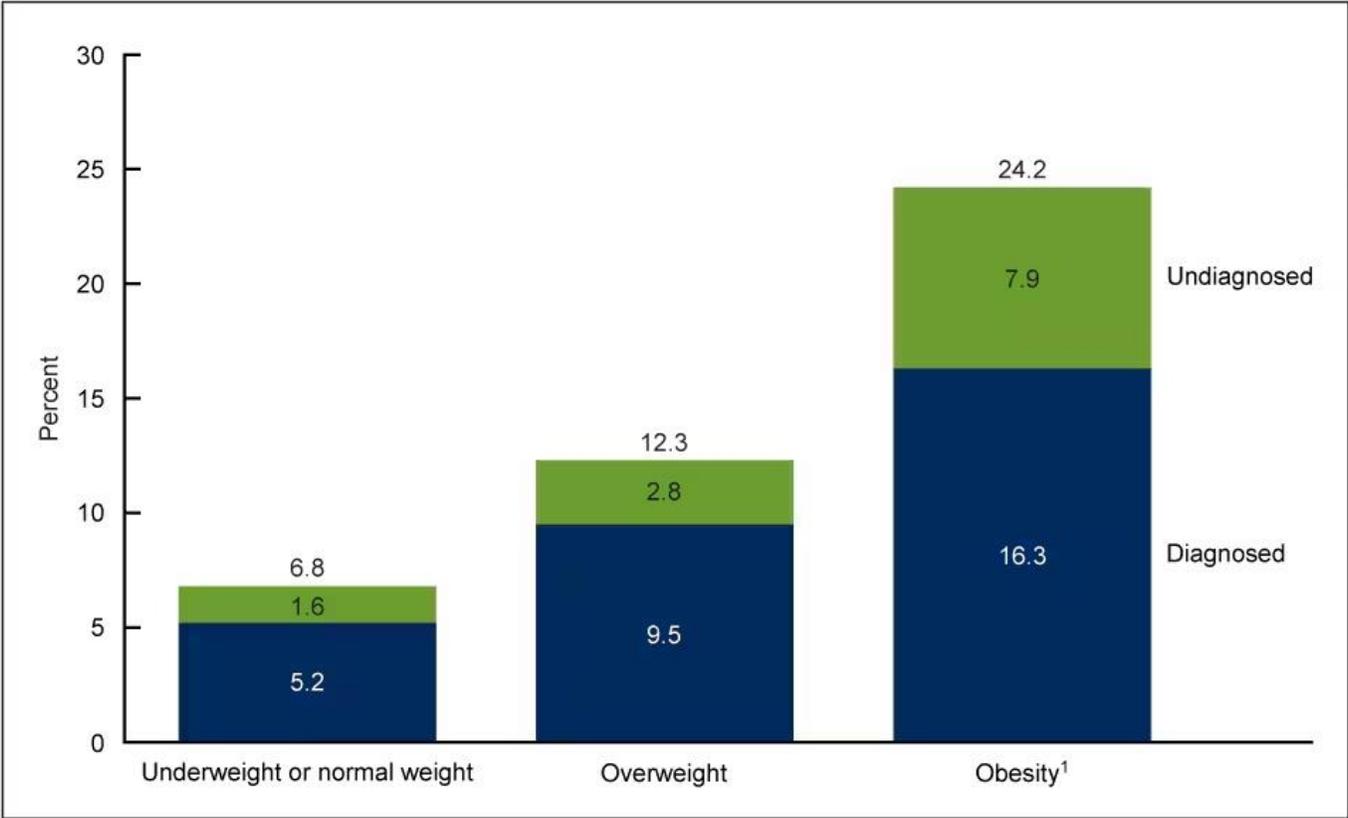
“ Medicine, in particular, has to speak up and say that there are going to be consequences if you are morbidly obese. ”



*Woman's Head and Hand, painting by Pablo Picasso / WikiArt*

# Because of Bias in Healthcare, People with Obesity Avoid It

Figure 3. Prevalence of total, diagnosed, and undiagnosed diabetes in adults age 20 and older, by weight status: United States, August 2021–August 2023



<sup>1</sup>Significant increasing linear trend for total, diagnosed, and undiagnosed diabetes ( $p < 0.05$ ).  
NOTES: Estimates for diagnosed diabetes are based on responses to the survey question, "Other than during pregnancy, have you ever been told by a doctor or health professional that you have diabetes or sugar diabetes?" Estimates for undiagnosed diabetes are based on an 8- to 24-hour fasting plasma glucose greater than or equal to 126 mg/dL or hemoglobin A1c greater than or equal to 6.5% in a participant who reported never receiving a diabetes diagnosis from a healthcare provider. Body mass index is weight in kilograms divided by height in meters squared. Weight status categories are defined as underweight or normal weight, body mass index less than 25.0; overweight, body mass index 25.0–29.9; and obesity, body mass index 30.0 or more.  
SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, August 2021–August 2023.

# Many Health Advocates Have Long Built Implicit Bias Into Their Messaging



# Many Health Advocates Have Long Built Implicit Bias Into Their Messaging

*Biometrics*



*Behaviors*

2010

## Circulation

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### Obesity as a Disease, Not a Behavior

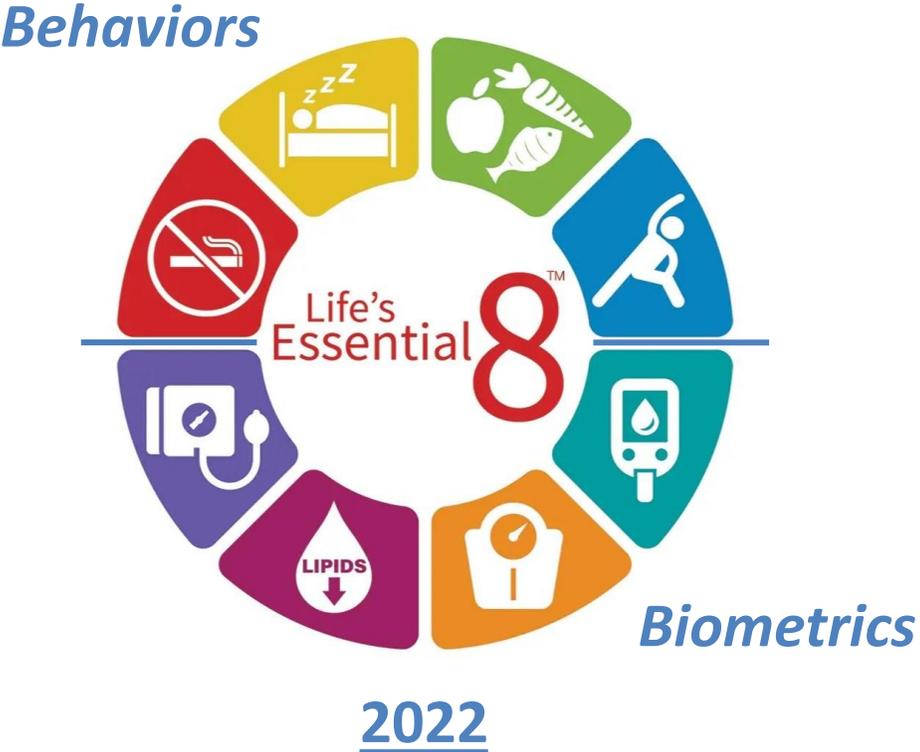
Penny Gordon-Larsen, PhD, and [Steven B. Heymsfield, MD](#) | [AUTHOR INFO & AFFILIATIONS](#)

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# Many Health Advocates Have Long Built Implicit Bias into Their Messaging



# Insurance and Health Systems Keep People Away from Medical Obesity Care

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## Financial Issues

- Spotty and limited coverage
- Discriminatory procedures and financial penalties
- High costs

## Systemic Issues

- Constrained capacity for care
- Few trained providers
- Limited drug supplies

# Seeking Treatment for Obesity Is Often Stigmatized



People

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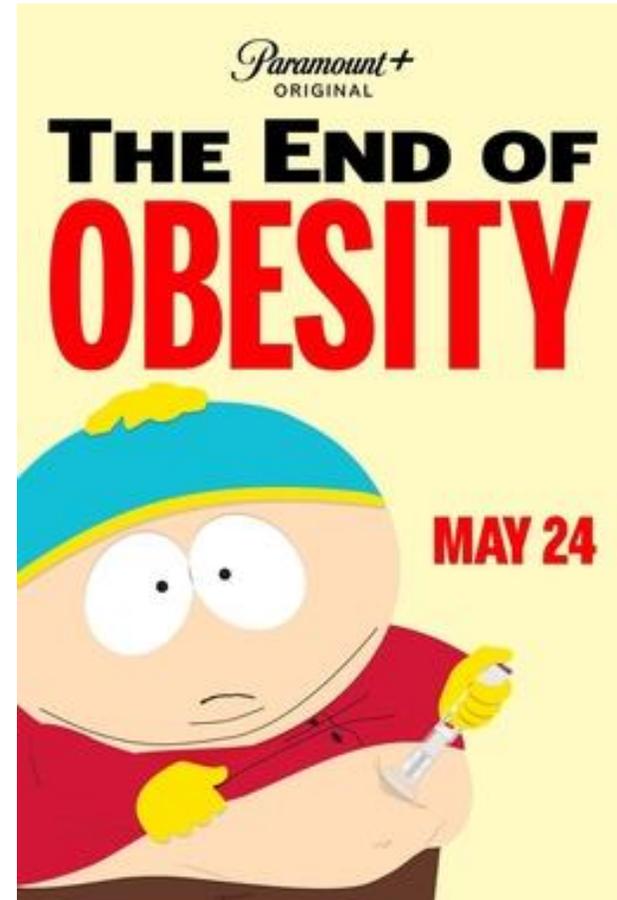
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Teens with Severe Obesity Forgo Weight Loss Surgery Due to Stigma, Lack of Information and Costs

# As with Diabetes, Self-Care for Obesity Is Essential but Not Sufficient

"Rich people get Ozempic,  
poor people get body positivity"



# The Result Is Widening Health Disparities

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Zahra Azizi, MD, MSc  , Fatima Rodriguez, MD, MPH , and Themistocles L. Assimes, MD, PhD 

[AUTHOR INFO & AFFILIATIONS](#)

Circulation • Volume 150, Number 3 • <https://doi.org/10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.124.069680>

# In Summary

- DIY obesity care has long been the dominant paradigm
- Because both obesity and its treatment are widely and implicitly stigmatized
- Self-care is important
- But is not adequate for overcoming obesity



Rose and Amélie, painting by Edvard Munch / WikiArt