

Primary Care Physicians' Knowledge, Attitude and Practice towards Bariatric Operations in the Kingdom of Bahrain

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ABSTRACT

Background: Obesity is an epidemic treatable disease. In Bahrain, the prevalence of obesity was 36.2%. Bariatric surgery should be considered for patients with BMI ≥ 40 , or ≥ 30 with obesity-related comorbidities. Family physicians have a key role in identifying and counseling patients who may qualify for bariatric surgery. The most common reason for physicians' refusal of referral for bariatric surgeries is fear of complications followed by concern of ineffective weight loss following the surgery. Doctors are not comfortable providing post bariatric operation care.

Aim: To study the PCPs' knowledge, attitude and practice towards bariatric surgeries in the kingdom of Bahrain.

Methods: this is a cross-sectional study of a convenient sample of physicians working in the Kingdom of Bahrain health centers, using an electronic and manual questionnaire to test the knowledge, attitude and practice towards bariatric surgery.

Results: The sample included a total of 222 participants. 56.1% agreed that the BMI ≥ 40 without weight related comorbidities is an indication for bariatric surgery and 92.3% of them referred patients for bariatric surgery, with BMI (88.6%) as the most influential factor followed by presence of comorbidities (87.8%). On the other hand, lack of resources was the main cause for not referring patient for bariatric surgery (29.4%) followed by concerns with follow up (23.5%). 80.6% are comfortable to initiate conversations with their patients about bariatric surgery, while 36.1% feel comfortable explaining the procedural options to a patient. 83.8% agreed that additional medical education in bariatric surgical care would be useful.

Conclusion: Primary care physicians showed well knowledge about the referral criteria to bariatric surgeries and that's reflected by the high referral rate (92.3%). But there is a gap in the knowledge mean score across different age groups and experience. Less than half of the physicians are not comfortable dealing with patients. Continuous medical education is essential to address the gap and to establish comprehensive obesity management guidelines for primary care physicians.

Keywords: Family physician, Bariatric surgeries, Obesity, Bahrain, Primary care

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