

Short Communication**Obesity: Let's Talk About Preventable Cancer Causes**

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Obesity is becoming one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century since it proves to be one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality affecting the whole planet. Presently, 30% of the global population is obese and the number is expected to rise to 50% by 2030.

Given the fact that the connection between obesity and carcinogenesis is well documented nowadays, the increase in obesity rates is causing great concern among health professionals. It is estimated that 20% of cancer cases are caused by extreme accumulation of body fat and data collected over the past 25 years reveal that 20% of cancer deaths in women and 14% in men are attributed to obesity. Obesity as a causative factor of preventable cancer cases comes second in numbers just behind smoking, yet considering that average weight is continuously rising in the global population this could change for the worst.

Epidemiological evidence suggests a strong connection between obesity and several types of cancer. Reports from the International Agency of Research into Cancer (IARC) and the World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) show that this is true for the following 13 types of malignancies:

- Postmenopausal Breast cancer
- Colorectal cancer
- Renal cancer
- Endometrial
- Thyroid tumors
- Pancreatic cancer
- Liver tumors
- Multiple myeloma



- Gastric cardia
- Meningioma
- Ovarian tumors
- Esophageal AC
- Gallbladder

Post-menopausal women seem to be facing the greatest risk since fat accumulation during menopause triggers a metabolic cascade leading to carcinogenesis. The Million Women Study has shown that almost 50% of cancer cases in postmenopausal women are attributable to obesity. On the other hand, the Swedish Obese Subject Study that followed 1420 women (18 years) after bariatric surgery, showed a decrease in overall and female-specific (breast and endometrial) cancer risk.

Although the connection between obesity and carcinogenesis is more studied in the female population men are also threatened. Studies show that midlife weight gain is a strong cancer risk factor for both men and women. Subjects who became overweight during midlife have 2.18 fold and 1.60 fold increase in total cancer risk respectively. The connection is stronger in the group with concurrent metabolic dysfunction like Diabetes Type 2 (DT2), common comorbidity among obese people. Obesity and Diabetes are both epidemiologically linked to cancer together or independently since they seem to contribute to carcinogenesis through various interactive pathways, not the subject of this text.

The most disturbing observation is that many of the malignancies noted to occur with increasing frequency in young adults are among the group of 13 obesity-associated cancers. The fact that the incidence of obesity among children and young adults increases worldwide, combined with the emerging probability that obesity even at a young age has a long-term effect in carcinogenesis, leads to the conclusion that obesity will lower the age of occurrence of multiple malignancies to younger age groups in general. Needless to mention the disastrous effect of this evolution!

February is the worldwide dedicated cancer awareness month and all implicated parties recognize that the only way to make a durable difference is to focus on prevention. Efforts should be targeting primarily on eliminating the causes of carcinogenesis. Obesity is one of them and it's preventable!

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