

I'm Obese. Should I be Depressed ?

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In the current year, the World Health Organization (WHO) has chosen the Depression as the central axis of the World Health Day, which is celebrated on April 7th. Depression is defined as a negative mood state which involves a feeling of sadness.

According to the WHO, more than 350 million people around the world suffer from this mental disorder; therefore, it has become a world leading cause of disability. Nowadays, it has been recognized that depression and obesity are closely related. Hormones like ghrelin, play a key role in the so called "brain-gut" axis, contributing to the increase in food intake and body weight; as well as the development of psychopathologies, such as depression and anxiety disorders.

It has been reported that obese population have a 55% higher risk of developing depression, while depressed people show a 58% higher risk of becoming obese. Then, a vicious environment arises, because obesity related morbid conditions may directly impact on psychological well-being, leading to depression. Likewise, mental disorders may lead to unhealthy lifestyles, including increased appetite and low adherence to weight loss programs, which limit people's effort to maintain healthy eating habits and adequate weight. Therefore, obesity and depression are conditions that may perpetuate each other. In the other hand, a highly worrying issue is that both pathological entities can develop from childhood or adolescence, in populations lacking appropriate health systems or without access to health professionals specially trained in primary care. It has been estimated that up to 65% of the population that suffers depression does not receive the required specific care.

Obesity and depression directly affect the quality of life and cause significant socioeconomic losses; hence, it is of vital importance to perform interventions at any age, but especially in childhood, trying to identify these problems in a timely manner to provide effective treatment. The classification of the obesity and depression as a joint disorder would be relevant for establishing innovative and effective public health policies.