Misperceptions, Fear Inhibit Discussions About Obesity Treatments

PRNewswire - Significant barriers are keeping adults affected by obesity in Nashville, Tennessee,and physicians from talking frankly about bariatric surgery, according to a new survey sponsored by the Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) and Ethicon Endo-Surgery. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has found that 32 percent of adults in Tennessee are affected by obesity.
A recent survey of adults with obesity in Nashville found that while 83 percent had discussed weight with their healthcare provider, only 14 percent of these Nashville residents, who meet the National Institutes of Health guidelines for bariatric surgery, have had their doctor discuss weight loss surgery. "As a young woman and daycare teacher, I've always had a strong love for children. I was heartbroken when my doctor told me that I would have difficulties getting pregnant and my weight was likely a main factor. After several failed pregnancy attempts, I knew that I needed to regain control of my weight in order to be a mother," said gastric bypass patient Lauren Demain.
"I spoke with my doctor and attended a seminar at the Centennial Center for the Treatment of Obesity to get a better understanding of my weight loss options. Now, three years since I decided to have surgery, I've lost 126 pounds and have a beautiful 18-month old son. I believe my choice has made it possible for me to achieve great strides in my personal and family life, as well as my career."
Healthcare professionals were also recently surveyed at the national level, and results show that they tend to underestimate patients' willingness to discuss their weight and their receptiveness to discuss treatment options. Six in 10 physicians surveyed nationally believe most individuals affected by obesity are too embarrassed to discuss their weight with a healthcare professional. However, 73 percent of adults with obesity in Nashville reported they are not too embarrassed, suggesting the conversation would be welcomed.

The most frequently perceived drawback of bariatric surgery for individuals affected by severe obesity in Nashville is the unfounded fear that it is dangerous. "Bariatric surgery can result in significant long term weight loss for adults affected by severe obesity, where traditional approaches, such as diet and exercise, are often less effective," said Dr. Douglas Olsen, Medical Director, Centennial Center for the Treatment of Obesity and President of the Tennessee Chapter of the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery.

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