

# Two pandemics to fight: metabolic surgery and its effects on COVID-19 and obesity

## *Dos pandemias a combatir: cirugía metabólica y sus efectos sobre la COVID-19 y obesidad*

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To the editor

As of April 6, 2022, almost 500 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, including more than 6.1 million deaths have been reported to the World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>1</sup>. Obesity, hypertension (HT), and type 2 diabetes have all been identified as predictors of poor outcomes in COVID-19 infection (T2DM). Thrombotic events were identified as a contributing factor in death. Patients with obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) are more vulnerable to respiratory infections and have worse results.

Obesity is a disaster when it comes to COVID-19 infection and has been linked to an increased risk of HT, T2DM, OSA, and other metabolic disorders. These patients have a higher thromboembolic risk than the overall population<sup>2</sup>.

The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to exacerbate the obesity epidemic. Restriction of physical activity, limited availability to healthy food, deterioration of mental health, and deterioration of economic situation all contribute to the acceleration of obesity. The studies from the United States of America and the United Kingdom that obesity has increased the prevalence

of COVID-19 among the younger population are concerning<sup>3</sup>.

Metabolic surgery (MS) is a well-established method of treating obesity. However, all elective MS procedures have been postponed by national and international societies (International Federation for the Surgery of Obesity and Metabolic Disorders). Delaying surgery adds to the illness burden in these patients. As a result of societal stigma and economical constraints, MS is underutilized. In addition, there were concerns that MS changes immunity, putting these individuals at a greater risk of acquiring COVID-19.

There is no evidence that individuals undergoing MS surgery are at a higher risk of COVID-19 infection than the general population. Patients with MS who are obese lose fat stores, ameliorate their comorbidities, and so become less prone to severe outcomes if infected with COVID-19<sup>4</sup>.

COVID-19, according to the WHO, may never go away. We must strategize to combat both the COVID-19 and obesity pandemics at the same time. MS is the solution to both problems. When states aim to recommence elective health-care activities, it should

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be given top attention. MS is already known to be cost-effective and pays for itself in a matter of years. Furthermore, major multinational prospective studies on the link between obesity, MS, and COVID-19 should be conducted.

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## Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no competing interests.

## Responsabilidades éticas

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**Confidencialidad de los datos.** Los autores declaran que en este artículo no aparecen datos de pacientes.

**Derecho a la privacidad y consentimiento informado.** Los autores declaran que en este artículo no aparecen datos de pacientes.

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