



## **PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AMONG BARIATRIC SURGERY PATIENTS**

**Melinda Salisbury (Larissa A McGarrity, PhD)**  
**Division of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation**

### **Background**

40% of Americans have obesity, which places them at risk for morbidity and mortality. The most effective intervention for morbid obesity is bariatric surgery. Before a patient undergoes bariatric surgery, they receive a psychological evaluation to predict risk factors and potential challenges after surgery. However, existing research has focused primarily on weight outcomes and little is known about patients' psychological health post-surgery. The purpose of this study is to characterize psychological health in patients with obesity before and after undergoing bariatric surgery, and to define trajectories of psychological symptoms over time.

### **Methods**

Participants in the follow-up study will be patients who completed a preoperative psychological assessment in conjunction with either Roux-en-Y gastric bypass or sleeve gastrectomy surgery at the University of Utah 1.5-3 years ago (and for whom we have data from pre-surgery psychological assessment). Those who choose to participate will be asked to complete a follow-up survey that evaluates their psychological health post-surgery. Measures will include depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and the impact of weight on quality of life. Analyses will evaluate changes in psychological health before and after bariatric surgery.

### **Results**

Pre-surgery data includes 929 participants who presented for initial psychological evaluation. Average BMI in the sample falls into the class IV category for morbid obesity. Mean score of 15.3 on the Binge Eating Scale in this sample falls just below the traditionally accepted threshold of 17 concerning for problematic binge eating behaviors. Pre-operative analysis found that average scores for depression and anxiety in this sample fall into the mild range. 10% of patients reported a history of psychiatric hospitalization. There are no results for the post-surgery aims of the research at this time because recruitment is in process.

### **Discussion**

Using a subset of measures from the pre-surgical evaluation, psychological health in patients post-surgically will be evaluated by an online questionnaire. Surveying patients who underwent surgery between 1.5-3 years ago will demonstrate how quality of life and psychological health is affected over time. This research can improve pre-bariatric psychological assessments by allowing for improved prediction of psychological health in this vulnerable patient population.