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PHOTO BY KING LAWRENCE

Obesity is a national epidemic. Television coverage, magazine and newspaper often call our attention to the fact that as a nation we are getting fatter. Many New Year's resolutions include a new diet and an ambitious exercise plan. But every year many Americans battle with their weight. Our children are getting fatter and schools across the country are even noting children's BMI (body mass index) as part of their report cards. Just how many overweight Americans are there? Almost 60 million of us, approximately one-third of Americans are obese. In the past we looked at actuarial charts and determined our ideal weight, but today we calculate obesity by using the BMI. This gives us a better picture of our true weight status. BMI is calculated using a formula which includes height and weight. Adults with a BMI between 25-29 are considered to be overweight and those people with a BMI of 30 or higher are considered to be obese. As we know, being overweight predisposes us to many diseases, among them diabetes, osteoarthritis and

Interested providers should have their patients log on to www.wliaz.com or call (480) 829-6100 to RSVP for a free seminar. At the seminars patients are able to further their knowledge base on the Lap-Band and other bariatric procedures. The seminars are conducted by the surgeons and patients will have the capability of asking questions during the presentation.

coronary heart disease. One of the CDC's long-range goals is to reduce our nation's overweight population to 15% by 2010, but in light of current statistics and trends it seems an overly optimistic goal. For patients who have 10-20 pounds to lose, diet and exercise and a little perseverance can usually work. But for patients who are in excess of 50 pounds of their optimal weight, diet and exercise simply is not enough. Many studies, including one by the NIH, indicate that the best route for patient success is a combined approach including bariatric surgery and education — where patients are guided in their eating and exercise programs after their surgery.¹ Another study has shown that morbidly obese people who diet without the complement of bariatric surgery regain the weight lost, and more often than not gain more than they lost.² This becomes the paradigm of yo-yo dieting and greater weight gain.

Drs. John J. DeBarros and Michael J. Orris of the Weight Loss Institute of Arizona are fully trained bariatric surgeons and can help your overweight and obese patients achieve their optimal weight goals through bariatric surgery. That the doctors at Weight Loss Institute of Arizona are fully trained bariatric surgeons is an important distinction to note, as superior outcomes generally come from those surgeons trained specifically in the bariatric arena. Bariatric surgery is a safe and effective means of weight loss in a specific cohort of patients. DeBarros explained to *M.D. News* that the Lap-Band is a new modality for weight loss, for the especially heavy patient. It is noteworthy that this group of patients has tried many kinds of weight-loss programs, including exercise, low-calorie diets, shakes and pre-packaged foods. They generally have been on at least 40-50 kinds of diets, and only get heavier after each attempt at weight loss. All patients who seek care at the Weight Loss Institute of Arizona have attempted to lose weight under supervision for at least two years. Lives and careers have been destroyed or curtailed, and many dreams have not come to fruition due to weight gain and the concurrent co-morbidities. Patients who were no longer working due to osteoarthritis attributed to weight, diabetes, hypertension and other known weight-related problems have been able after surgery to restart their lives or resume their former ones. Orris notes that the preponderance of their patients has tried some kind of behavior modification as well as diet and exercise, have had at least two supervised diet programs and have not been successful, either in losing the weight or keeping it off. Most of Weight Loss Institute of Arizona patients have been obese for at least five years, and those who have been obese since childhood thought that they had little choice in whether they were obese or not.

Orris also points out that a portion of their patients have noticed that they are getting heavier and heavier, and have extrapolated what they will weigh in a few years. These patients see that they will be morbidly obese and can expect to live with many disease processes stemming from their overweight. A godly number of these patients also have undiagnosed diabetes.

THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Patients who have been struggling with their weight for years and have heard about the FDA-approved Lap-Band surgery usually come to a seminar at the Weight Loss Institute of Arizona, where they learn about their program, the positive choices available to them and what surgical choices they have. If patients feel this surgery is right for them, they make an appointment for an initial consultation. This consultation lasts for up to four hours. They are seen by program specialists who review insurance options, and then they meet with the dietician, an exercise physiologist, a physician, a clinical psychologist, nurses and a radiology technician. All testing necessary is done on site, and an electronic folder of pertinent records is sent to their primary health care physician. When the patient walks out the door of Weight Loss Institute of Arizona, their records are ready to be reviewed by the patient and their physician. All patients at this point are given a list of goals and objectives that must be met prior to surgery. Some are diet and exercise related; the diet portion of these goals is to “teach” the patient how to eat after the surgery.

Some goals include exams/tests such as upper/lower endoscopy, cardiac clearance, sleep study, well woman exam, etc. Patients usually complete these goals within four weeks. There is a pre-op visit to review accomplished goals, and a two-week pre-operative diet of high protein/low fat intake to get the patients into the most optimal condition before surgery. Both DeBarros and Orris believe that the patient must take responsibility for themselves, but they also believe that Weight Loss Institute of Arizona has a role in educating the patient. Education is the key to success in this battle for wellness. After surgery, patients are enrolled in a support group which meets every four to six weeks and is led by the staff clinical psychologist. In this modern age, there is even an online support group for patients to turn to. The dietician plays a key role in getting patients ready for surgery, and eating healthy and successfully after surgery. There is a great deal of one-on-one time with the dietician, who works hard to educate patients not only about what to eat but how to eat. There is a pre-surgery nutrition plan and four postsurgical eating phases. The stage-four plan will grow into the life plan

for patients. At any point, the dietician will work to find recipes and food alternatives to make this as stress-free an experience for these patients, who are often eating healthy for the first time in their lives. Patients are taught about food and the best foods for them. The program at Weight Loss Institute of Arizona is an individualized one. After surgery, the patient has the tools for successful weight loss, and a specialized team ready to assist them every step of the way, until they reach their optimum weight and even after.

SURGERY: ROUX-EN-Y BYPASS AND THE NEW LAP-BAND

At the Weight Loss Institute of Arizona, both Drs. DeBarros and Orris are fully trained to perform Roux-en-Y gastric bypass surgery and the FDA-approved minimally invasive Lap-Band procedure. Patients who are morbidly obese and present with life-threatening co-morbidities are candidates for gastric bypass, since they must lose this weight rapidly in order to have a chance at a life that has some degree of quality. These patients generally have a BMI 25% higher than that of “overweight” people. With bypass surgery, patients can lose up to 60-70% of their excess weight in about two years. The surgery literally can save their lives. After the weight loss, many no longer are diabetic, some no longer have joint disease, and many of these patients are able to stop taking

Lap-Band



Educators from the Weight Loss Institute of Arizona are available by appointment to go into individual doctors' offices to conduct informational breakfast and/or lunch educational seminars on the Lap-Band and other available bariatric procedures. Please contact Paul Barros, Director of the Weight Loss Institute of Arizona, via e-mail: paul@wliaz.com or call (480) 829-6100 ext. 110.

disease-specific medications. These patients are also enrolled in the support program and are followed for three years. They have access to the dietician and psychologist when needed.

Patients lucky enough to be candidates for the Lap-Band are usually in and out of the hospital the same day. Lap-Band criteria has been established by the NIH. These patients have a BMI above 40 or are in the 30-40 range with co-morbidities that will improve or disappear with weight loss. The criteria for Lap-Band candidates is stringent: they are between 18-65 years old, have been a “stable” obese person for five years, and have failed diet attempts and weight loss drug therapy for more than one year. There can be no glandular disease process present such as hypothyroidism. Patients must comprehend the realities of the surgery and the new way of eating, and they must be compliant in the pre-surgery stage of the process, which can last up to six weeks. Patients must be drug, alcohol and smoke free.

The procedure takes between 45 minutes to an hour. The



Michael Orris, D.O.

patented Lap-Band is laparoscopically introduced via a 1 cm incision and placed in such a way as to create a small stomach pouch of about 15 cc. Postsurgery, at an office visit, the band is tightened by introducing saline solution into the neck of the device. The stoma of this “small” stomach, which is created in the upper part of the stomach, can be adjusted to increase or decrease food intake, depending on the needs of the patient. Patients will lose 10-12 pounds per month. There is ongoing support, and all patients are followed vigorously for a minimum of three years. DeBarros and Orris are proud of the educational component of

their practice. Weight loss at this level is not easy for the patients and their family, and that’s why the Weight Loss Institute of Arizona believes foremost in educating and mentoring the patient. Help from the psychologist for psychological difficulties and help in choosing menu items is always available. The dietician also reviews the supplement needs of both bypass and Lap-Band patients, which are different. Patients know they will be mentored throughout the experience and are empowered by this. This is not only about losing weight, but about changing lifestyles and helping the patients achieve their weight-loss objectives.

Lap-Band is a safer, quicker and better alternative to bypass surgery for those patients who qualify. The advantages to Lap-Band are same-day or short hospital stay, no cutting of the stomach, no stomach stapling, no re-routing of the intestines, completely adjustable for the patient’s current needs, and completely removable and reversible. Lap-Band presents less surgical risk for the patient.

Clinically severe obesity is a chronic disease in the United States. There are medical, economic, social and psychological difficulties associated with this disease. For these patients, diet, weight loss and behavior modification only set the patient up for failure, because after they lose the weight, they gain back more. For many patients, years of failure and being

disheartened have turned to optimism and a new outlook on life and themselves because of the Lap-Band. The Lap-Band is just the beginning on the road to a happier, healthier life. The Weight Loss Institute of Arizona has many patient success stories, including those who were able to return to work and become functioning members of society.

PATIENT TESTIMONIALS

Making the decision to have bariatric surgery involves commitment on the part of the patient, and an understanding of what



John J. DeBarros, M.D.

the road ahead really means. With the education and support of the entire professional staff at Weight Loss Institute of Arizona, patients can't help but succeed. Brandon and Jennifer and Brad are only three of the myriad success stories happening everyday in the Tempe office.

Brandon Van Buskirk found himself at the age of 24, weighing 355 pounds. When he was 16, he weighed 210 pounds, and as the months and years went by the pounds started to creep up. He tried exercise and diet. For a teen trying to lose weight, maintain school grades and attempting to have a social life, it was just too much. Last year he was alerted to the fact that being so severely overweight was going to have a toll on his health. He researched bariatric surgery

and went to see Dr. DeBarros at Weight Loss Institute of Arizona. He was reassured about the procedure, the outcome and his ability to successfully lose the weight. He immediately understood the pre-op and post-op regimes he'd have to adhere to and knew he was making a positive decision regarding his future. Three months post-op he was playing ice hockey. Today, people do a double take when they see him, because they're not sure it's him. Brandon feels a newfound joy in life, enjoys shopping for great clothes, and regained his self-confidence. Today he weighs 220 pounds, which is acceptable for his height.

Jennifer and Todd Bradshaw are a couple that really believes in doing things together. Their weight started climbing after they got married. The parents of five beautiful children, the Bradshaws realized that their weight, a combined weight of almost 600 pounds, was detrimental to the family as a whole, and to themselves as a couple. They turned to Weight Loss Institute of Arizona after many attempts to lose weight, which they often did, but it always came back with a vengeance. The couple decided on the Lap-Band, and the rest is history. One year later as a couple they have lost almost 235 pounds. Jennifer and Brad look better, feel better and are happy that they will be able to experience the joys of parenthood, and look forward

to all their children's successes in the future.

Please contact Paul Barros, Director of the Weight Loss Institute of Arizona, via e-mail: paul@wliaz.com, log on to www.wliaz.com, or call (480) 829-6100 ext. 110. ■

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www.wliaz.com