



PARTNERSHIP TO ADVANCE

**Cardiovascular
Health**

4/10/2024

The Honorable Chiquita Brooks-LaSure
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

RE: Coverage for Obesity Treatment

Dear Administrator Brooks-LaSure:

We applaud the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) recent decision to cover semaglutide, an anti-obesity medication (AOM) that is indicated for cardiovascular risk reduction in people with existing cardiovascular disease. We are writing to advocate for the expansion of coverage by CMS to allow AOM treatment for all people with obesity. We hope that you will extend coverage to include their use in treating obesity to significantly improve public health outcomes, particularly in combating the prevalence of cardiovascular disease (CVD).

The statistics concerning cardiovascular disease and obesity are alarming. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States, responsible for ~700,000 deaths annually. Moreover, obesity is a significant contributing factor to the development of cardiovascular diseases, with individuals with obesity being at a much higher risk of experiencing heart attack, stroke and other related complications like obstructive sleep apnea.

In recent years, research has highlighted the efficacy of AOMs in treating obesity. Clinical trials have demonstrated that AOMs lead to meaningful weight loss in individuals with obesity, thereby reducing their risk of developing cardiovascular complications. Furthermore, studies have shown that weight loss achieved through AOM treatment is associated with improvements in metabolic parameters such as blood pressure, cholesterol levels and glycemic control, all of which are crucial factors in reducing the risk of CVD.

By covering AOMs for obesity treatment, CMS has an opportunity to address a root cause of cardiovascular disease in many individuals. Obesity is not only a risk factor for CVD but also exacerbates existing conditions, leading to increased healthcare costs and decreased quality of life for patients. By providing access to effective obesity treatments like semaglutide, CMS can further help mitigate the burden of cardiovascular disease on the healthcare system while improving outcomes for patients. Treating obesity is not simply about weight loss.

We urge CMS to consider the significant public health benefits of expanding coverage for semaglutide and other AOMs to include its primary use, treating obesity. By doing so, CMS can play a crucial role in lowering the prevalence of cardiovascular disease, which is obesity's most common comorbidity. This decision aligns with CMS's mission to improve access to high-quality healthcare services and promote better health outcomes for all beneficiaries.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We hope that CMS will continue to take proactive steps to expand coverage to AOMs and make a positive impact on the health of millions of Americans.

Sincerely,

Aimed Alliance
Alliance for Aging Research
Alliance for Women's Health and Prevention

Alliance of Sleep Apnea Partners
American Association of Clinical Endocrinology
American Gastroenterological Association
American Liver Foundation
American Nurses Association
American Society for Preventive Cardiology
American Society for Nutrition
Association of Black Cardiologists
Color of Gastrointestinal Illnesses
ConscienHealth
Diabetes Leadership Council
Diabetes Patient Advocacy Coalition
Digestive Disease National Coalition
Fatty Liver Foundation
Global Healthy Living Foundation
Global Liver Institute
Haitian Alliance Nurses Association International
HealthyWomen
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
National Black Nurses Association
National Consumers League
National Council on Aging
National Forum for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention
National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Hispanic Health Foundation
National Hispanic Medical Association
North American Thrombosis Forum
Nurses Obesity Network
Karla Rodriguez, DNP, CNE, NC-BC, DipACLM
Obesity Action Coalition
Obesity Care Advocacy Network
Obesity Medicine Association
Partnership to Advance Cardiovascular Health
Physician-Patient Alliance for Health and Safety
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
Society for Women's Health Research
StopAfib.org
The Mended Hearts, Inc.
The Obesity Society
WeightWatchers
WomenHeart