

BARIATRIC DIGEST

BARIATRIC NEWS FROM THE SURGICAL WEIGHT LOSS CENTER OF UTAH JUNE 2005



Digest Dialogue The Surgical Advantage By Dr. Christina Richards

Obesity—it's the second leading cause of preventable death in the United States and expected to bypass the number one killer—cigarette smoking. Much of this risk is due to the associated co morbidities. We now know that we can offer surgical treatment with reasonable risks and known outcomes. The weight loss associated with surgery should be expected to effect diabetes (90% cure), hypertension (80% cure) and coronary artery disease (50-75% decreased risk of mortality). Many other conditions will improve or resolve such as sleep apnea, dyslipidemias, and stress urinary incontinence.

Who is a candidate for surgery? Not everyone is a candidate for surgery. Patients have to be medically fit, psychologically stable, and most importantly, **willing to make a commitment to changing diet and exercise patterns.** One of the most difficult things for me to assess is who is able to make these changes. At the Surgical Weight Loss Center of Utah, we rely on a team approach to making the decision. We work with a psychologist, a dietitian, and an exercise physiologist as well as a nurse and former patients to assess and educate patients. Often we will require the patient to demonstrate their ability to follow through with lifestyle changes before we will consider operating.

Some patients are not candidates for surgery even though they would clearly benefit from weight loss.

The National Institutes of Health have established very clear guidelines as well. We stick to these absolutely. Patients must be at least 18 years of age, and have a BMI greater than 40 or greater than 35 with life-threatening co morbidities. They also have to be able to understand the risks and changes associated with surgery, and have demonstrated previous weight loss attempts.

What do we offer? We seek to provide a personal touch with excellent pre-operative teaching about diet and exercise, anatomy and physiology as well as expected psychological changes. All patients see the dietitian and exercise physiologist before as well as after surgery. Support groups after surgery provide ongoing reinforcement and teaching.

Currently there are two surgical options: the Laparoscopic Adjustable Band as well as the Roux-en-Y Gastric Bypass (most of these are done laparoscopically).

In the coming months, we will be providing you with more information specific to obesity and its treatment. You can refer patients to our information line **1-866-401-8446 (THIN)**, or the Salt Lake Regional website with a link to the Surgical Weight Loss Center of Utah. We look forward to working with you and are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Patient Success Story

After many bouts with weight control, 63-year-old Larry Tingey is finally shedding the weight after having gastric bypass surgery in November 2004.

Dr. Christina Richards, a surgeon for the Surgical Weight Loss Center of Utah at Salt Lake Regional Medical Center performed the surgery and is the only female surgeon in the state of Utah to perform bariatric procedures. Both Dr. Richards and Larry are amazed at the progress Larry has made in the few months since surgery.

“With the co-morbidities that Larry was suffering from, we weren't sure we could put him under anesthesia,” explains Dr. Richards.

Larry suffered from over half of the co-morbidities related to obesity including; high blood pressure, sleep apnea, high cholesterol, acid reflux and heart disease.

“The first time I met with Dr. Richards, it was all I could do to get from the parking lot to Dr. Richards' office. “I knew going into the surgery that I might not make it,” says Larry Tingey. “I was relieved to wake up in the ICU and the first thing that came out of my mouth was a question to Dr. Richards. Did you do it? If it hadn't been for Dr. Richards and her confidence in her ability to do this, I don't think I would have ever found a surgeon to do it.”

Larry, a contractor by trade and a former professional baseball player with the St. Louis Cardinals organization, now prepares to live life to the fullest. Since surgery Larry has increased his physical activity including running and finishing 14 miles of the Salt Lake Marathon. Larry now goes by one simple motto:

“I eat to live, instead of living to eat.”

Larry's Picture

Before



After

