Regional recommendations for the treatment and management of adult obesity in the Gulf & Lebanon:

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

next steps and resources
Contents

Background 3

Overview of the Regional Recommendations 4

Key Challenges and Opportunities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 5

Steps to Implementing the Regional Recommendations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 6

Useful Resources and Materials 7
Background

On December 6th, 2019, a group of clinical and public health obesity experts convened in Muscat, Oman to discuss the potential for, and content of, regional recommendations on obesity. Among the experts there were representatives of Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United Arab Emirates.

The group was convened by the World Obesity Federation to share experiences of national initiatives, guidelines and recommendations (where they exist). The lack of comprehensive guidelines was noted as a major obstacle to the delivery of appropriate care, and the group called for the amendment of international guidelines to fit the regional context.

The outcome of this meeting was a set of co-developed regional recommendations for the treatment and management of obesity. These recommendations lay out the ideal obesity care pathway for those living with obesity who may desire medical support to live healthier lives. The recommendations are followed by a synopsis of current activities in the represented countries to highlight progress to date and areas for improvement.

When the recommendations were published, it was acknowledged that they would need to be accompanied by clear implementation plans to facilitate their adoption at a national level. To support this, World Obesity is working with the co-authors of the recommendations to host national workshops in each of the participating countries.

This document presents the toolkit and implementation plan for Saudi Arabia. These were developed following a virtual workshop held by World Obesity in collaboration with the Saudi Arabia Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery and the Saudi Commission of Health Specialties. A report on the workshop, Recommendations and Strategies to Prevent and Manage Obesity in the KSA: What to do next?, has been published separately.

SEE RECOMMENDATIONS HERE ON THE WORLD OBESITY WEBSITE:
Overview of the Regional Recommendations

The recommendations outline the ideal clinical pathway for adults aged 18 and above living with obesity following the different stages of care. They advise on how to address obesity sensitively and effectively during medical appointments and offer advice on what interventions and human resources should be available at each level of care. It has been noted, however, that the recommendations may need to be reviewed to fit national and local contexts.

The ideal clinical pathway proposed in the recommendations is presented in Figure 1. A prerequisite to the delivery of comprehensive, multi-disciplinary obesity care, however, is the recognition of obesity as a chronic, progressive and relapsing disease by all parties. This includes governmental bodies, healthcare providers, insurers, healthcare professionals, patients and the general public.

The recommendations propose how obesity care should be delivered in primary, secondary and tertiary care (or equivalents), and why it should incorporate all available interventions including, but not limited to, low-level and intensive lifestyle interventions, pharmacotherapy, and bariatric surgery. Throughout the pathway there is an emphasis on the importance of the multidisciplinary team and how care decisions should be in conjunction with the patient.
Key Challenges and Opportunities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

These challenges and opportunities were determined during the workshop – Current Recommendations and Strategies to Prevent and Manage Obesity in the KSA: What to do next? – held on Friday, 2nd April 2021.

- Vision 2030 presents a major opportunity for action on obesity.
- The economic implications of obesity for the healthcare system are severe and unsustainable.
- Obesity-related challenges in KSA can be broken down into patient-related challenges, community-related challenges, policy-related challenges, and healthcare provider-related challenges.
- There are several strategies, guidelines and policies in KSA – the challenge is implementation on the ground.
- KSA has several competing guidelines; there needs to be unification and one set that everyone follows.
- One of the main barriers to guideline implementation is lack of capacity; there are not enough trained professionals to deliver the interventions.
- Individuals living with obesity present to the healthcare system late and have insufficient knowledge about treatment options.
- The full range of obesity interventions are not being utilised, especially obesity medication.
- Insurance companies are insufficiently covering obesity care, especially post-op in the case of surgery.
- Obesity management and treatment are skewed to tertiary care; primary care must play a greater role.
Steps to Implementing the Regional Recommendations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

These identified steps to implementing the regional recommendations stem from the above key challenges and opportunities. It is recommended that these priorities are the focus of efforts for 2021 and 2022.

1. Use momentum around Vision 2030 to push for implementation of obesity efforts and employ the use of KPIs to do so.

2. Use evidence of the economic impact of obesity to encourage action.

3. Allocate budgets to obesity so that stakeholders and sectors can focus on implementation and invest in the monitoring and evaluation of all programmes and policies.

4. Unify all parties - including the Ministry of Health, SASMBS and the Public Health Authority - so that going forward there is one set of obesity and bariatric guidelines that everyone follows.

5. Mandate all parts of the healthcare sector to implement existing guidelines.

6. Encourage insurance companies to cover the full range of obesity treatment in line with existing guidelines.

7. Empower individuals with obesity to seek out care earlier and promote patient education.

8. Increase training and education on the use of obesity medication.

9. Increase capacity within primary care to deliver low-level interventions and follow-up care.

10. Improve public health messaging around obesity and the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle.

11. Recognise obesity as a chronic disease, not just a risk factor for other diseases, starting with a position statement from the “Public Health Authority” and/or the “SASMBS” (similar to the 2017 World Obesity Federation position statement).

12. Adopt the National Bariatric Registry initiative by Sultan Ben Abdulaziz Humanitarian City to improve the quality of research on bariatric surgery and to create a truly national database.

It is recommended that key stakeholders in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia take these 12 steps and prioritise them to initiate action. Stakeholders are encouraged to work with national, regional and international organisations to use existing resources and materials to prevent the duplication of efforts and to encourage collaboration. Vision 2030 offers a prime opportunity for the adoption of the elements of the regional recommendations as seen fit for the Saudi Arabian context.
Useful Resources and Materials

- Saudi Arabia Vision 2030
  www.vision2030.gov.sa/en

- Gulf & Lebanon Regional Recommendations
  www.worldobesity.org/resources/resource-library/gulf-lebanon-regional-recommendations

- Global Patient Portal
  www.worldobesity.org/patient-portal

- Saudi Arabia Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery
  www.sasmbs.net/

- Global Obesity Observatory
  data.worldobesity.org/

- World Obesity, Economic Impact of Obesity
  data.worldobesity.org/costs/

- World Obesity, Obesity & COVID-19 Resources
  www.worldobesity.org/resources/policy-dossiers/obesity-covid-19

- Saudi Commission for Health Specialties
  www.scfhs.org.sa/

- Kayl Association for Combating Obesity
  www.kayl.org.sa/