



LIVED EXPERIENCE SUMMIT 2026

Obesity Lived Experience
Global Summit | Pre-Congress Event

July 14, 2026 | Mexico City, Mexico





Welcome to the Lived Experience Summit

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Welcome to the Lived Experience Summit! We are so pleased you are able to join us for the Summit, the International Congress on Obesity, and events throughout the week.

Our Summit, focused around People at the Centre: Integrating Lived Experience in Obesity, reflects a core belief among a growing number of organizations working in obesity: that people affected by obesity must be at the centre, as key stakeholders and experts.

For World Obesity Federation, today's Summit is a major milestone. Over the past year and a half, we have been working with our members, partners, and patient-advocate allies to foster a network of obesity advocates from around the world. As part of a global obesity community, your experiences and insights are critically important, and we aim to connect you with one another and to amplify your voices.

At the same time, the global health community is undergoing important developments in obesity prevention and care, including the expansion of World Health Organization guidelines and ongoing discussions on integrating obesity into universal health coverage frameworks.

The group gathered here this week includes many representatives from our host country, Mexico, as well as advocates from all corners of the world – from the Pacific Islands to Brazil, India to Canada, South Korea to Spain, and many more. Given the cross-cutting nature of obesity, we also welcome people with obesity from diabetes, heart, and other metabolic health groups.

Our focus this week is on sharing science and policy, strengthening stories, and encouraging promising practices towards a network of champions in countries where the patient voice is still emerging, and places where it is well underway. We are also delighted to welcome you to the International Congress on Obesity, where clinicians, public health professionals, students, and advocates from Mexico and across the globe are gathering and where your voice and presence are essential.

The Summit has been organized with support from sponsors joining the morning session, and we extend our deep thanks to this group for their support and commitment. The Summit is also a shared effort with our members, including the Obesity Action Coalition, Obesity Canada, Obesidades Mexico, SMO, and partners including the World Health Organization, UNICEF, United Patients/Catalyst, and many others.

Have a wonderful week!

Johanna Ralton, on behalf of the World Obesity Federation family

Amber Huett Garcia and Ogwen Stephen, Lived-Experience Representatives, WOF Board of Trustees

About the Summit

The **Obesity Lived Experience Global Summit 2026** is a dedicated pre-congress event ahead of the International Congress on Obesity (ICO) 2026. It provides a structured, educational, and empowering forum for people living with obesity or related conditions to:

- Strengthen understanding of health systems, policy processes, and global frameworks and how they relate to national and local action.
- Develop practical skills in communication, storytelling, media engagement, and constructive advocacy within professional and policy settings.
- Address weight stigma and bias, exploring their impact on health outcomes, healthcare interactions, and policy.
- Foster peer exchange, network building, and collaboration across geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds with a strong emphasis on diversity, inclusion, and equitable representation.
- Co-create actionable strategies and commitments that participants can take forward in their own communities and regions.

The programme features facilitated workshops, moderated panel discussions, small group exercises, and peer learning sessions. Content has been co-developed with lived experience contributors and is supported by experienced facilitators from the World Obesity Federation, member organisations, and partner patient groups.

Core Themes: Turning lived experience into personal and policy impact • Health systems strengthening • Global accountability tools (WHO Acceleration Plan, UN NCD processes) • Stigma reduction • Cross-regional solidarity and alliance building.

Programme Agenda

Tuesday, 14 July 2026 • Mexico City, Mexico • 07:30 – 14:00 (with afternoon events)

Time	Session / Activity	Leads & Speakers / Facilitators
07:30 – 08:00	Registration & Networking Breakfast	—
08:00 – 08:30	Welcome & Icebreaker: Building a Lived Experience Community <i>Interactive “My Experience” exercise to connect participants and turn personal stories into community and policy impact</i>	Johanna Ralston with Dr. Karen Sealey Introduce Amber Huett-Garcia Alessandra Durstine (facilitator)
08:30 – 09:15	Understanding Obesity in the Health Policy Landscape & Role of Lived Experience (Q&A;) <i>Global perspectives, MAPPS framework, UHC, and why lived experience is critical evidence for person-centred responses</i>	Dr. Bruno Halpern, Dr. Luz María De Regil Ogwen Stephen (facilitator)
09:15 – 10:15	Panel: From Personal Story to Policy Message <i>Advocates share journeys, challenges, and how lived experience reveals barriers and drives change in healthcare, policy, and advocacy</i>	Panel: Salih Hendricks, Dr. Kim Yoohyun, Antonia Gama, Lisa Schaffer Joe Nadglowski (facilitator)
10:15 – 10:30	Coffee Break & Stretch	—
10:30 – 11:15	Global Tools and Targets: Advancing Obesity on the Global Health Agenda (Q&A;) <i>Obesity in global discussions, UHC, access to care; opportunities for lived experience input at all levels</i>	Maggie Wetzel & Bruno Helman, Francesca Celletti Alessandra Durstine (facilitator)
11:15 – 11:20	Sponsors Depart	—
11:20 – 12:00	Breakout I: The Human Story – Demonstrating Barriers in Healthcare Systems <i>Explore how personal stories reveal challenges and can be transformed into policy asks</i>	Alessandra Durstine (facilitator)
12:00 – 12:15	Group Report Back	All
12:15 – 13:00	Breakout II: By Region – Policy Barriers, Enablers & UHC Asks <i>Regional discussions using MAPPS guidance to identify barriers/enablers and develop country-specific UHC asks</i>	Alessandra Durstine (facilitator)
13:00 – 13:15	Region Report Back	All
13:15 – 13:30	Turning Ideas into Action: Priorities, Timelines & Next Steps	Alessandra Durstine
13:30 – 13:45	Closing: WOF Next Steps, Diplomas & Group Photo <i>Participants invited to lunch together at Hyatt restaurant</i>	Johanna Ralston and Amber Huett-Garcia

Additional Events – Tuesday, 14 July 2026

15:30 – 17:00 | Global Commitment to Better Obesity Care: Introducing the Foundational Patient Charter

(Hyatt Don Gabriel Room, 2nd floor above lobby) | WOF & Obesity Canada

18:00 | ICO 2026 Welcome & Networking Reception (Olmeca 4, World Trade Center) | —

Programme subject to minor adjustments. Registered participants will receive final details and any updates via email.

Featured Speakers & Facilitators

We are honoured to bring together a distinguished group of global leaders, advocates, clinicians, and policymakers who champion lived experience and person-centred approaches to obesity.



Johanna Ralston

Chief Executive Officer, World Obesity Federation

Johanna Ralston has been CEO of the World Obesity Federation since 2017. She works with a global network of over 100 member organisations, alongside expert boards and committees, to advance the Federation's priorities across advocacy, convening, education, and data and science. Under her leadership, the Federation has strengthened its role as a global voice on obesity, working with governments, the World Health Organization and international partners to support country-level action and promote person-centred, evidence-based approaches to prevention and care. In 2025, she led the launch of a new three-year strategy to accelerate progress on obesity worldwide. Previously, Johanna served as CEO of the World Heart Federation and as VP of Global Affairs at the American Cancer Society. A dual citizen of the United States and Sweden, she is also a lived experience advocate and a strong voice for reducing stigma and improving access to care.



Dr. Karen Sealey

Board Member, World Obesity Federation; Founder & Chair, Trinidad & Tobago NCD Alliance (TTNCDA)

In her 26 years with PAHO/WHO, Dr Karen Sealey held several senior positions at subregional, regional and global levels. As Caribbean Program Coordinator, she spearheaded the adoption of the Caribbean Health Promotion Charter, established the Awards for Excellence in Health Journalism, and raised the profile of NCDs and mental health in national health plans. She was seconded to UNAIDS as Director, Regional Support team for the Caribbean. In her final PAHO/WHO posting, she served as the organisation's first Special Adviser at the UN, providing strategic leadership for CARICOM's advocacy that led to the 2011 UN Political Declaration on NCDs. Since retirement, she has completed national and international consultancies and served as Executive Technical Adviser to the Minister of Health, Trinidad and Tobago (2016-19). Dr Sealey is also a member of the Boards of the Healthy Caribbean Coalition and the InterAmerican Heart Foundation.



Amber Huett-Garcia

Board of Trustees, World Obesity Federation (Lived Experience Representative); Consultant & Advocate

Amber Huett-Garcia is an obesity care advocate and current member of the World Obesity Federation's Board of Trustees, representing lived experience. She served on the U.S.-based Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) Board of Directors for 9 years, including 2 years as chair. She is a founding member of the Global Obesity Patient Alliance (GOPA), representing the United States, and a 2018 recipient of Medtronic's Bakken Invitation. Amber brings the lived experience perspective through her work as she maintains a 245-lb weight loss achieved through combination therapy, including revisional metabolic surgery. Amber is a full-time consultant in Memphis, Tennessee. She was elected in 2022 to represent District 8 of the Memphis-Shelby County Schools Board and is a current candidate for the Shelby County Commission. When not working or volunteering, Amber enjoys traveling, cooking, listening to live music, exercising, and spending time with her daughter, Parker.



Alessandra Durstine

Founder & Principal, Catalyst Consulting Group; Board Member, Unión Latina Americana para la Lucha Contra el Cáncer de la Mujer

Alessandra Durstine has 25 years of international experience working in health, business development, marketing, and media engagement in both non-profit and for-profit sectors. She started her career at the United Nations, creating training programs for women-led businesses, then worked at the International Planned Parenthood Federation developing public-private partnerships. Her media experience includes serving as VP of International Marketing at ESPN. She then led global advocacy and capacity building for civil society at the American Cancer Society. Durstine founded Catalyst Consulting Group in 2012, which works to build capacity for social change in low-resource settings. Since 2013, she has been a Board Member of the Unión Latina Americana para la Lucha Contra el Cáncer de la Mujer and in 2014 founded the digital training platform Pacientes Unidos. She holds an MBA from the Wharton School and a BA in International Relations from Tufts University. She is a dual citizen of Venezuela and the United States and speaks Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian.



Dr. Bruno Halpern

President, Brazilian Association for the Study of Obesity (ABESO); Chief Director, Obesity Centre of Hospital 9 de Julho, São Paulo

Dr Bruno Halpern graduated and completed fellowships in Internal Medicine and in Endocrinology and Metabolism at the University of São Paulo, Brazil, where he also earned a PhD studying circadian rhythms and brown adipose tissue. He is the current chief-director of the Obesity Centre of Hospital 9 de Julho and a medical collaborator at the Obesity Group at the University of São Paulo. He acts as Associate Editor of the journal 'Clinical Obesity'. He is currently President of ABESO and President of the Obesity Department in the Brazilian Society of Endocrinology and Metabolism. He is a PI in Endocrinology at BrTrials, a clinical research centre in São Paulo dedicated to clinical trials.



Dr. Luz María De Regil

Director, Department of Nutrition and Food Safety, World Health Organization

Dr Luz María De Regil is the Director of the Department of Nutrition and Food Safety at WHO. She is responsible for the strategic and managerial work of the Department with Member States and partners to prioritize, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate multisectoral efforts to ensure universal access to effective nutrition actions, safe food and healthy diets. An Epidemiologist with 20 years of experience across public, private, non-profit and intergovernmental sectors, her expertise spans basic science research to large-scale public health programming and policy. Prior to her current position, she was Unit Head of Multisectoral Actions in Food Systems at WHO, Vice-President of Global Technical Services at Nutrition International (Canada), and Epidemiologist at WHO. She has authored more than 150 peer-reviewed and policy publications and served on multiple international advisory bodies. She holds a Doctorate in Public Health Sciences, a Master's in Sciences, postgraduate studies in International Negotiation and Policy Making, and a Bachelor's in Nutrition and Food Sciences.



Ogweno Stephen

Founder & CEO, Stowelink Foundation; Steering Member, WHO NCDs Labs; NCD Alliance 'Our Views Our Voices'

Ogweno Stephen is an award-winning global health enthusiast, NCDs advocate and author. His background is in global health (Cambridge University and University of Manchester). He is known for developing programmes and innovations aimed at improving health literacy and access to care for chronic diseases. As founder and CEO of Stowelink Foundation, he has led implementation of such programmes in over eight countries in Africa and continues to develop innovations to make health accessible to the next one billion Africans. Ogweno serves on several boards and committees globally, including as a steering member of WHO NCDs Labs under 'NCDs and the Next Generation' and at the NCD Alliance under 'Our Views Our Voices'.



Joseph Nadglowski

President & CEO, Obesity Action Coalition (OAC)

Joseph Nadglowski is President and CEO of the Obesity Action Coalition. A frequent speaker and author on the importance of obesity awareness, he has more than 25 years of experience working in patient advocacy, public policy and education and is a graduate of the University of Florida. As a patient advocate who has publicly shared his own personal experience with obesity as well as those of OAC's members on many boards, taskforces, workgroups and in public testimony, Mr. Nadglowski was recipient of the 2012 Society for the Study of the Alimentary Tract (SSAT) Public Service Award. He has dedicated significant work toward the recognition of weight bias and its impact. He has been a guest of First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House to discuss childhood obesity and has testified before the FDA on increasing treatment options for individuals affected by obesity.



Maggie Wetzel

Public Policy Professional, World Obesity Federation Advocacy Team

Maggie is a public policy professional working at the intersection of healthy diets, noncommunicable disease prevention, and good governance. As an Argentinian political scientist from the University of Buenos Aires, she specialised in Governance and Development at the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex. She led global health advocacy at World Cancer Research Fund International, advocating for healthy diets and physical activity to prevent cancer and other diet-related diseases at WHO. Prior to that, she worked at the United Nations Development Programme and has experience in Latin American legislative processes in obesity prevention as well as food and agriculture policy.



Bruno Helman

Public Health & Youth Advocate; KiDS Coordinator, International Diabetes Federation; Founder & CEO, Running for Diabetes

Bruno Helman is a Public Health and Youth advocate with special focus on NCDs. He holds a postgraduate diploma in Health Economics from USP and a Bachelor's in International Relations from PUC-SP. He has extensive experience with Civil Society Organizations, currently representing the Brazilian Diabetes Society (SBD) as its Young Leader on the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) and as part of the Advisory Global Committee for 'Our Views, Our Voices' from NCD Alliance. He previously served as PAHO Advocacy Consultant for the Brazilian Ministry of Health. He works as KiDS (Kids and Diabetes in Schools) Coordinator for IDF. He is the founder and CEO of Running for Diabetes, a non-profit promoting inclusion and health of people living with diabetes through physical activity. He has completed 15 marathons.



Francesca Celletti

Lead, WHO Global Effort to Combat Obesity

Driven by a deep sense of purpose and commitment to health and science equity, Francesca Celletti has over 25 years in global health. She brings a strategic, evidence-based approach to complex public health challenges—building high-performing teams, guiding multisectoral partnerships, and driving innovation. Her career spans biomedical and pharmacological research at Stanford University, to leading large-scale health system strengthening and service delivery initiatives at WHO and the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, addressing HIV, NCDs, and COVID-19. She currently leads WHO's global effort to combat obesity, aligning political, financing, and scientific agendas with public health priorities to accelerate impact in countries.

Additional facilitators and regional advocates from partner organisations will also contribute to breakout sessions and discussions.

50+ Advocates from 18 Countries and 6 Regions

Lived-Experience Attendees Represented

Latin America & the Caribbean

Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Uruguay

North America

United States, Canada

Asia

India, Malaysia, South Korea

Europe

Denmark, Spain, UK

Africa

Kenya, South Africa

Oceania & Pacific

Australia, Tonga



Thank You to the Lived Experience Summit Sponsors

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of our sponsors, whose contributions help make this important event possible.



While our sponsors have contributed to the funding of the Obesity Lived Experience Global Summit 2026, they have not had any control or influence over the content of the event or any materials/activities that were developed for this event.

Thank you for your commitment to advancing person-centred approaches to obesity care and advocacy.