

## Medical Ethics: Semaglutide and the New Wave of Weight Loss Treatments

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FYI: New series, begins October 30

- Nishmat Avraham Orach Chaim <https://hebrewbooks.org/51473>
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Our agenda

In the past two years, existing and new medications have become popular as a means of controlling weight for medical or other purposes. However, some of the treatments are off-label, and all of them are linked to significant side effects. Further, the motivations for weight loss may raise ethical questions, such as when losing weight for the limited purpose of dating, or when family members coerce a relative to undergo treatment. We will discuss the general issue of reducing one's desires as a way to deal with problematic or dangerous behaviour, as well as the complicated questions raised by these new medications.

Evaluation link	<a href="https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/semaglutide">https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/semaglutide</a>
Past medical sessions	<a href="https://torontotorah.com/nusbaum">https://torontotorah.com/nusbaum</a>
Cosmetic Surgery/Micropigmentation (2017)	<a href="https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/874183/">https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/874183/</a>
Mental Health, Human Dignity and Halachah (2018)	<a href="https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/908576/">https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/908576/</a>
Alternative Medicine (2021)	<a href="https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/989740/">https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/989740/</a>

### Vignettes

- 1> Richard, age 55, is unhappy with his appearance and unsuccessful in maintaining an exercise regimen. With the wedding of his daughter approaching, he is desperate to lose weight. He has heard that semaglutide can reduce appetite and so aid in losing weight. Richard's doctor does not consider his weight unhealthy. Would Jewish medical ethics support Richard injecting himself with semaglutide to lose weight for cosmetic benefits?
- 2> Richard asks his doctor for a prescription for semaglutide. His doctor explains that the medication will cost \$1000 CAD per month and will not be covered by OHIP. Would Jewish medical ethics support this cost for a cosmetic benefit?
- 3> Richard begins the course of medication, and experiences common side effects, such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Would Jewish medical ethics support him continuing on semaglutide for the sake of cosmetic benefits?
- 4> Judy, age 30, has been dating for years, without finding the right match. Recently, her parents have begun to suspect that Judy's weight is making it harder for her to find a date. Judy is not generally receptive to parental dating advice. Would Jewish law permit them to press her to try semaglutide?
- 5> Judy takes her parents' advice and starts on semaglutide, with common side effects. At first she wants to discontinue the medication, but then her doctor suggests that perhaps she could stay on it until she finds a spouse, and then stop taking the medication. Would Jewish ethics permit Judy to do this?

### The Starting Point: Semaglutide, Liraglutide, Tirzepatide

1. Mariana Lenharo, *Anti-obesity drugs' side effects: what we know so far*, Nature 10/13/23

The treatment of obesity has been revolutionized by new drugs such as semaglutide and tirzepatide. In clinical trials, these medications led to substantial weight loss — as much as an average of 21% of participants' body weight — and semaglutide has also been shown to [cut the risk of severe cardiovascular problems](#), which specialists celebrated as a groundbreaking result...

The latest generation of anti-obesity drugs mimic a hormone called glucagon-like peptide 1 (GLP-1), which is associated with appetite regulation. Semaglutide was approved by the US Food and Drug Administration in 2017, under the name Ozempic, to treat type 2 diabetes, and later, in 2021, as Wegovy, for the treatment of obesity. Tirzepatide, marketed as Mounjaro, was approved in 2022 to treat diabetes, but is also prescribed off-label for weight loss.

2. Gina Kolata, *We Know Where New Weight Loss Drugs Came From, but Not Why They Work*, NY Times 8/17/23  
Researchers discovered by accident that exposing the brain to a natural hormone at levels never seen in nature elicited weight loss. They really don't know why, or if the drugs may have any long-term side effects. "Everyone would like to say there must be some logical explanation or order in this that would allow predictions about what will work," said Dr. David D'Alessio, chief of endocrinology at Duke, who consults for Eli Lilly among others. "So far there is not."...

The drugs can cause transient nausea and diarrhea in some. But their main effect is what matters. Patients say they lose constant cravings for food. They find themselves satisfied with much smaller portions. They lose weight because they naturally eat less — not because they burn more calories.

And [results from a clinical trial](#) reported last week indicate that Wegovy can do more than help people lose weight — it also can protect against cardiac complications, like heart attacks and strokes.

But why that happens remains poorly understood.

"Companies don't like the term trial and error," said Dr. Daniel Drucker, who studies diabetes and obesity at the Lunenfeld-Tanenbaum Research Institute in Toronto and who consults for Novo Nordisk and other companies. "They like to say, 'We were extremely clever in the way we designed the molecule,'" Dr. Drucker said. But, he said, "They did get lucky."...

In the 1970s, obesity treatments were the last thing on Dr. Joel Habener's mind. He was an academic endocrinologist starting his own lab at Massachusetts General Hospital and looking for a challenging, but doable, research project. He chose diabetes. The disease is caused by high blood sugar levels and is typically treated with injections of insulin, a hormone secreted by the pancreas that helps cells store sugar. But an insulin injection makes blood sugar plummet, even if levels are already low. Patients have to carefully plan injections because very low blood sugar levels can result in confusion, shakiness and even a loss of consciousness.

Two other hormones also play a role in regulating blood sugar — somatostatin and glucagon — and little was known then about how they are produced. Dr. Habener decided to study the genes that direct cells to make glucagon. That led him to a real surprise. In the early 1980s, he [discovered a hormone](#), GLP-1, that exquisitely regulates blood sugar. It acts only on insulin-producing cells of the pancreas, and only when blood sugar rises too high...

The drugs, said Randy Seeley, an obesity researcher at the University of Michigan, are not correcting for a lack of GLP-1 in the body — people with obesity make plenty of GLP-1. Instead, the drugs are exposing the brain to hormone levels never seen in nature. Patients taking Wegovy are getting five times the amount of GLP-1 that they would produce in response to a Thanksgiving dinner, Dr. Seeley said. And, he added, in the brain, "the drugs go to unusual places." They are not just going to areas thought to control overeating. "If you were designing a drug, you would say that's a bad idea," said Dr. Seeley, who has consulted for Novo Nordisk and Eli Lilly, among others. Drug designers try for precision — a drug should go only to the cells where it is needed.

GLP-1, because of its chemical structure, should not even get into some areas of the brain where it slips in. "Nobody understands that," Dr. Seeley said.

Wegovy, though, is just the start. Lilly's diabetes drug, tirzepatide or Mounjaro, is expected to get F.D.A. approval for obesity this year. It hooks GLP-1 to another gut hormone, GIP. GIP, on its own, produces, at best, a modest weight loss. But the two-hormone combination can allow people to lose a median of about 20 percent of their weight. "No one fully understands why," Dr. Drucker said.

Lilly has another drug, retatrutide, that, while still in early stages of testing, seems to elicit a median [24 percent weight loss](#). Amgen's experimental drug, AMG 133, could be even better, but is even more of a puzzle. It hooks GLP-1 to a molecule that blocks GIP. There is no logical explanation for why seemingly opposite approaches would work.

### A Halachic Attitude to Weight Management

#### 3. Talmud, Makkot 16b

המשהה את נקביו עובר משום לא תשקצו... האי מאן דשתי בקרנא דאומנא קא עבר משום לא תשקצו.

One who makes his orifices wait is liable for 'You shall not render your lives disgusting.'... One who drinks from a phlebotomist's horn is liable for 'You shall not render your lives disgusting.'

#### 4. Rambam (12<sup>th</sup> century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Deiot 4:1

הואיל והיות הגוף בריא ושלם מדרכי ד' הוא, שהרי אי אפשר שיבין או ידע דבר מידיעת הבורא והוא חולה, לפיכך צריך להרחיק אדם עצמו מדברים המאבדין את הגוף, ולהנהיג עצמו בדברים המברין והמחלימים...

Having a healthy, whole body is from the paths of Gd, as one can neither understand nor know anything about Gd when ill. Therefore, one must distance himself from anything which damages the body, and one must accustom himself to behaviours which increase health and strength...

5. Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra (15<sup>th</sup> century Spain/Israel), Commentary to Maimonides, Laws of Sanhedrin 18:6  
שאיין נפשו של אדם קניינו אלא קנין הקב"ה שנאמר "הנפשות לי הנה" הילכך לא תועיל הודאתו בדבר שאינו שלו, ומלקות פלגא דמיתה הוא.  
A person's life is not his property; it is the property of Gd, as Yechezkel 18:4 says, 'The souls are Mine.' Therefore, one's admission regarding something that is not his cannot be effective. [This is even true if the admission would lead not to death but only to lashes, for] lashes are a partial death.

6. Talmud, Shabbat 140b  
ואמר רב פפא האי מאן דאפשר למישתי שיכרא ושתי חמרא עובר משום בל תשחית ולא מילתא היא בל תשחית דגופא עדיף  
Rav Pappa said: One who can drink beer, and instead drinks wine, is liable for wasting [money].  
However, this is not so: Liability for wasting one's body is greater.

7. Talmud, Shabbat 50b  
רוחץ אדם פניו ידיו ורגליו בכל יום בשביל קונו משום שנאמר "כל פעל ד' למענהו."  
One should wash his face, arms and legs daily for his Creator, as it says, "All that Gd created is for Him."

8. Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein (21<sup>st</sup> century Israel), Shiurei Torah l'Rofim III pp. 198-199  
הגיעה אלי אשה השוקלת 133 ק"ג ואינה סובלת ממחלות אחרות. כל בדיקות הדם תקינות. האשה השתמשה בהרבה תכשירים שלא עזרו לה. לאחרונה יצאה לשוק בצרפת ובגרמניה תרופה הנקראת XENICAL – 021 MG שמונעת ספיגת שומנים על ידי מניעת פירוק השומן על "האנזים לופיז". את התרופה לוקחים פעם ביום, אוכלים רגיל, ואפשר לרזות עד 10 ק"ג לחודש. לדברי היצרן אין תופעות לוואי, ואפשר אפילו לשלב את התרופה עם תרופות אחרות. בעלה של האישה לא מרשה לה לקבל את התרופה [למרות שהיא מקבלת אותה חינם]. שאלתי היא האם אני יכול לתת לה את התרופה למרות התנגדות הבעל...

מורי חמי מרן הגאון רבי יוסף שלום אלישיב שליט"א השיב שאם מדינות חשובות התירו להשתמש בתרופה זו, מותר לאשה להשתמש בה, מאחר וגם ההשמנה היא סכנה, ולכן אין מהתבונה להחמיר יותר מאשר מדינות חשובות, ואין להתחשב בהתנגדות הבעל.  
[Question from a doctor in 1999:] A woman came to me. She weighs 133kg and does not suffer from other illnesses. All of her bloodwork is normal. She has used many methods which have not helped. Recently, a medication called XENICAL-021MG came on the market in France and Germany; it prevents fat absorption by inhibiting the enzyme lipase from breaking down fats. They take this medication once daily, eat normally, and can reduce their weight by up to 10kg per month. Per the manufacturer there are no side effects, and one can even take this medication along with other medications. The woman's husband is not allowing her to receive this medication [even though she would receive it free of charge]. My question is whether I may give her the medication despite the husband's opposition...  
My father-in-law, the great Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, answered that if important countries have permitted use of this medication, this woman may use it, since obesity is dangerous. It would not be logical to be more strict than important countries. One should not take into consideration the husband's opposition.

9. Rambam (12<sup>th</sup> century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Deiot 4:1-2  
לפיכך צריך להרחיק אדם עצמו מדברים המאבדין את הגוף, ולהנהיג עצמו בדברים המברין והמחלימים, ואלו הן: לעולם לא יאכל אדם אלא כשהוא רעב, ולא ישתה אלא כשהוא צמא, ואל ישהא נקביו אפילו רגע אחד, אלא כל זמן שצריך להשתין או להסך את רגליו יעמוד מיד. לא יאכל אדם עד שתמלא כריסו אלא יפחות כמו רביע משבעתו...

Therefore, one must distance himself from anything which damages the body, and one must accustom himself to behaviours which increase health and strength, which are: One should never eat unless one is hungry; one should never drink unless one is thirsty; one should not make one's bowels wait, even for a moment, but one should always halt one's activities immediately when one needs to urinate or defecate. One should not eat to the point of satiation, but one should be about one-quarter less than full...

10. Rambam (12<sup>th</sup> century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Deiot 4:15  
ואכילה גסה לגוף כל אדם כמו סם המות, והוא עיקר לכל החלאים, ורוב החלאים שבאים על האדם אינם אלא או מפני מאכלים רעים, או מפני שהוא ממלא בטנו ואוכל אכילה גסה אפילו ממאכלים טובים...

And overeating is like poison for the body, the essence of all illness. Most of the illnesses that come upon a person are only due to bad food, or due to filling his stomach and overeating, even with good food...

11. Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century Poland), Mishneh Berurah 170:45

כתב אליה רבה בשם השל"ה... יאכל הטוב והמועיל לו לרפואה ולא מה שערב לו לפי שעה.

Eliyah Rabbah wrote, citing Rabbi Yeshayahu HaLevi Horowitz (Sh"lah)... One should eat that which is good and medically beneficial, not that which is sweet to him at the moment.

### Medicine We Don't Understand

12. Rambam (12<sup>th</sup> century Egypt), Commentary to Yoma 8:6

וחכמים אומרים אין עוברין על מצוה אלא ברפוי בלבד שהוא דבר ברור שההגיון והנסיון הפשוט מחייבים אותו, אבל הריפוי בסגולות לא, לפי שענינם חלוש לא יחייבהו ההגיון, ונסינו רחוק

The Sages say one may transgress only to heal in a clear way, such that logic and experience mandate it. One may not heal with *segulot*, because their nature is weak and their capabilities are not logically mandated, and they are untested.

13. Rambam (12<sup>th</sup> century Egypt), Commentary to Shabbat 6:10

וכן מדמים בעלי הסגולות שאם לוקחים מסמר מעץ הצלוב ותולים על מי שיש לו קדחת תמידית מועיל לו. והלכה כר' יוסי, לפי שהכלל אצלינו כל שיש בו משום רפואה אין בו משום דרכי האמורי, ולא עליו אמר הכתוב ולא תלכו בחקות הגוי וכו'

People who traffic in *segulot* imagine that if they would hang a nail from the tree of *tzliva* on someone with chronic fever, it would help him. The law follows Rabbi Yosi (Rabbi Meir?), because our rule is that something medicinal is not subject to "Emorite ways", and the Torah did not say "Do not walk in the paths of the nations" regarding this.

14. Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra (16<sup>th</sup> century Egypt), Responsum 5 l'leshonot Rambam:153 (1526)

ויש לתרץ דעת הרב ז"ל דס"ל דרפואות הסגולות אינם רפואה כלל ואפי' ספק רפואה אין בהם לחלל בהם שבת באיסור תורה או לאכול דברים האסורים מן התורה

One could explain the master's view thus: *Segulah* medicines do not heal at all, and lack even potential healing to justify violating biblical laws of Shabbat or eating biblically prohibited foods.

### Vignette #1: Aesthetic Purposes

15. Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg (20<sup>th</sup> century Israel), Tzitz Eliezer 11:41:9

ברור דאין לך אלא חידושו במקום שהחבלה באה כדי לרפאות ולהשיב אבידת גופו, ויוצא מכלל זה חבלה לשם גוי ויופי שאין בה כל השבה של אבידת הגוף אם כי לחבול כדי לשנותו לפי טעמו ולהתחכם על הצורה שחקק בו יוצרו או כדי לחדש נעוריו ולסתור גזירת מלכו של עולם, ועל אחת כמה דנעלה מכל ספק שאסור לו לאדם בהחלט להכניס את עצמו עבור כך לשום סכנה כל שהיא...

It is clear that one can only permit [via "and he shall surely heal"] the novelty which is directly taught, to heal and restore the loss of one's body. This excludes wounding for the sake of beauty, which does not restore the loss of the body, but only wounds it to alter it as one wishes and to be clever regarding the form engraved by its Creator, or to renew its youth and contradict the decree of the Monarch of the world. How much more so is it beyond doubt that one certainly may not introduce himself into any danger for this...

16. Talmud, Bava Kama 91b

מאן תנא דשמעת ליה דאמר: אין אדם רשאי לחבל בעצמו? ... האי תנא הוא, דתניא: אמר ר"א הקפד ברבי, מה ת"ל: וכפר עליו מאשר חטא על הנפש? וכי באיזה נפש חטא זה? אלא שציער עצמו מן היין.

The view that says one may not harm himself matches the view of R' Elazar haKappar BeRebbi, who said: "Why does the Torah say that the Nazirite must bring an offering to atone for the sin he committed 'against a life?' Against whose life has he sinned?! It is because he pained himself by withdrawing from wine."

17. Talmud, Berachot 19b

גדול כבוד הבריות שדוחה [את] לא תעשה שבתורה. ואמאי? לימא אין חכמה ואין תבונה ואין עצה לנגד ד' (משלי כא)! תרגמה רב בר שבא קמיה דרב כהנא בלאו דלא תסור. אחיכו עליה, לאו דלא תסור דאורייתא היא! אמר רב כהנא גברא רבה אמר מילתא לא תחיכו עליה, כל מילי דרבנן אסמינהו על לאו דלא תסור ומשום כבודו שרו רבנן...

"Dignity is so great that it overrides a biblical prohibition." But why not apply Proverbs 21:30, "There is neither wisdom nor understanding nor counsel opposite Gd!" Rav bar Sheva explained before Rav Kahana: The prohibition here is that of, "Do not stray [from the words of the sages]."

They laughed at Rav bar Sheva; the prohibition of "Do not stray" is itself biblical!

Rav Kahana said: When a great man says something, do not laugh at him. The sages linked all of their words to the prohibition of "Do not stray", and for a person's dignity they permitted violation.

18. Rabbi Yosef Karo (16<sup>th</sup> century Israel), Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 312:1

משום כבוד הבריות התירו לטלטל אבנים לקנח...

Because of human dignity, they permitted moving stones for wiping...

19. Rabbi Yehoshua Neuwirth (20<sup>th</sup> century Israel), Shemirat Shabbat k'Hilchatah 34: note 52

ושמעתי מהגרש"ז אייערבך שליט"א דכל שיש בו משום כבוד הבריות כגון שהליחה נוזלת לו מן האף יש להקל טפי

I have heard from R' Shlomo Zalman that where dignity is involved, such as the liquid is running from his nose, there is room for greater leniency.

20. Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron (20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century Israel), Binyan Av 2:55:3

אדם פרטי שמחליט לכבד את עצמו ונוהג בגאווה שאינו נושא שק או קופה, כבודו משום שיקולים פרטיים אינו יכול לפטור אותו, או לדחות איסור דרבנן... אדרבא שיכבוש מידותיו ולא יבטל המצוה

The honour of an individual who decides to honour himself and be arrogant, refusing to carry a sack or box [to return it], is based on personal calculations and he cannot thereby exempt himself or override a rabbinic prohibition... Just the opposite, he should conquer his character and not cancel the mitzvah.

21. Rabbi Moshe Isserles (16<sup>th</sup> century Poland), Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 241:3

אם אין שם אחר לעשות והוא מצטער, הרי הוא מקיזו וחותר לו כפי מה שירשוהו לעשות.

Where no one else can do it and the father is in pain, the son should let blood and cut him as he permits.

22. Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (20<sup>th</sup> century Israel), Minchat Shlomo 1:32:1

וכ"כ גם הלבוש ועוד פוסקים שהחשש הוא שמא יחבול יותר ממה שצריך, א"כ גבי זריקות שעפ"י רוב אין זה עושה כלל חבורה מסתבר שאין להחמיר

So wrote the Levush and other authorities: The concern is lest he wound more than is needed. If so, then regarding injections, where the majority do not wound at all, it would be logical to say that one should not be strict.

23. Devarim 22:5

A man's implement shall not be on a woman, and a man shall not wear a woman's garment...

24. Talmud, Shabbat 50b

מגרר אדם גלדי צואה וגלדי מכה שעל בשרו בשביל צערו אם בשביל ליפות אסור

A man may scrape off layers of dirt or scabs from his flesh to mitigate pain, but not for beauty.

25. Tosafot (13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century Western Europe) to Shabbat 50b **בשביל**

ואם אין לו צער אחר אלא שמתבייש לילך בין בני אדם שרי דאין לך צער גדול מזה.

If he is in no pain other than being embarrassed to walk among people, it is permitted; there is no greater pain.

26. Rabbi Menasheh Klein (20<sup>th</sup> century Slovakia, USA), Mishneh Halachot 4:247

מבואר דהיכא דאית ליה צער שמתבייש מבני אדם אין בו משום לא ילבש ולפ"ז במי שיש לו כתמים נמי אם מתבייש מפני זה בין בני אדם מותר להעביר

It is clear that one who is in pain, embarrassed to be among people, is not subject to "A man shall not wear". Therefore, a man who has marks and is therefore embarrassed to be among people may remove them.

27. Rabbi Yosef Karo (16<sup>th</sup> c. Israel), Rabbi Moshe Isserles (16<sup>th</sup> c. Poland), Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 182:1

במקום שמעבירין אותו גם האנשים, אם העביר אין מנין אותו. הגה: ואפילו לכתחלה שרי. רק החברים נמנעים בכל מקום.

Where men also remove it, he is not punished for removing it. Rama: He may even do it ab initio; only *chaverim* abstain everywhere.

### Vignette #2: Spending for Aesthetics

28. Rambam (12<sup>th</sup> century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Deiot 5:9

מלבוש תלמיד חכם מלבוש נאה ונקי, ואסור לו שימצא בבגדו כתם או שמנונית וכיוצא בהן, ולא ילבש לא מלבוש מלכים כגון בגדי זהב וארגמן שהכל מסתכלין בהן, ולא מלבוש עניים שהוא מבזה את לובשיו אלא בגדים בינונים נאים

The clothing of a Torah scholar should be attractive and clean, and he may not have on his clothing a stain or fat or the like. And he should not wear regal clothing, like gold and purple, which everyone looks at, or a pauper's clothing which degrades the one who wears it, but intermediate, attractive clothing.

29. Talmud, Berachot 19b

"והתעלמת מהם" - פעמים שאתה מתעלם מהם ופעמים שאין אתה מתעלם מהם. הא כיצד? אם היה כהן והיה בבית הקברות, או היה זקן ואינה לפי כבודו או שהיתה מלאכתו מרובה משל חברו, לכך נאמר "והתעלמת".

"And you shall ignore them" – Sometimes you should ignore them and sometimes you should not ignore them. How so? If he is a kohen and in a cemetery, or if he is a *zaken* and it does not fit his dignity, or he has more work than the other does, therefore it says, "And you shall ignore."

30. Rambam (12<sup>th</sup> century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim 6:10

ולא האילנות בלבד, אלא כל המשבר כלים, וקורע בגדים, והורס בנין, וסותם מעין, ומאבד מאכלות דרך השחתה, עובר בלא תשחית...

And not only trees, but anyone who breaks implements, tears clothing, destroys a building, stops up a spring, or destroys food in a destructive way, violates "Do not destroy."...

### Vignette #3: Side Effects

31. Mariana Lenharo, *Anti-obesity drugs' side effects: what we know so far*, Nature 10/13/23

A research letter published last week in [JAMA](#) looked at a sample of people with obesity in a large health-insurance database. The authors found that the incidence of pancreatitis — inflammation of the pancreas — was 4.6 times higher in people taking semaglutide than in people taking a weight-loss medication that does not mimic GLP-1. The study also found that semaglutide and liraglutide, another GLP-1 medication, were associated with an increased incidence of gastroparesis, a disorder that slows or stops the movement of food from the stomach to the intestine.

Clinical trials had already shown an association between GLP-1 drugs and gastrointestinal side effects, including nausea, constipation and rare cases of pancreatitis<sup>3</sup>. "What's new is that, for all of them, we actually gave an incidence number," says Mahyar Etmnan, an epidemiologist at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, and an author of the *JAMA* research.

Jaime Almandoz, an endocrinologist at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, says that because clinical trials tend to exclude people who are at a higher risk of developing certain conditions, epidemiological studies can provide better insight into complications that might arise in the real world.

But the study has an important limitation, says Daniel Drucker, an endocrinologist at the University of Toronto in Canada. It relies on diagnoses recorded on health-care claims, which might not always be accurate. "A doctor can write down pancreatitis and there it is on the health-care claim. There's no additional scrutiny as to whether or not that's correct," he says...

Meanwhile, muscle-mass loss seems to be a concern for pharmaceutical companies developing anti-obesity drugs. Eli Lilly, the maker of tirzepatide, recently acquired Versanis, a company developing a medication called bimagrumab, which is being tested in combination with semaglutide for its potential ability to preserve muscle mass during weight loss.

"I think it is possible we will begin to see an occasional person with what we describe as sarcopenic obesity," Drucker says, referring to a combination of obesity and low skeletal muscle mass that results in muscle weakness. "How many of those people will there be? We don't know. This is something we'll need to monitor carefully."

[Data presented last week](#) at the European Association for the Study of Diabetes annual meeting in Hamburg, Germany, offered some reassurance. Researchers, including some from Eli Lilly, used magnetic resonance imaging to evaluate changes in body composition seen in people taking tirzepatide and concluded that some of the muscle volume lost was actually intramuscular fat. The loss of lean muscle mass, the authors concluded, wasn't greater than expected given the weight loss.

### 32. Matt Reynolds, *What the Scientists Who Pioneered Weight-Loss Drugs Want You to Know*, Wired 6/12/23

Jens Juul Holst is a professor in the Department of Biomedical Sciences at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark... What happens is that you lose your appetite and also the pleasure of eating, and so I think there's a price to be paid when you do that. If you like food, then that pleasure is gone. The craving for food for some people is taken away when they take GLP-1 drugs.

So you don't eat through GLP-1 therapy because you've lost interest in food. That may eventually be a problem, that once you've been on this for a year or two, life is so miserably boring that you can't stand it any longer and you have to go back to your old life.

### 33. Rabbi Hershel Schachter (21<sup>st</sup> century USA), *ואליו הוא נושא את נפשו*, Beit Yitzchak 1986

ויוצא לדינא שג' חילוקי אופנים יש: א. היכא דאיכא אומדנא דמוכח שכל אדם היה רוצה בטיפול רפואי זה, אז אמרינן דבטלה דעתו אצל כל בני אדם, וכופין אותו בעל כרחו משום "ונשמרתם". ב. והיכא דאיכא אומדן דעת דכל אדם לא היה רוצה בתרופה שכזו, אז אמרינן דבטלה דעתו אצל דעת כל בני אדם, ואסור לנו לייסרו על ידי טיפול, ואפילו הוא רוצה בזה. ג. והיכא דליכא אומדנא דמוכח לשום אחד מן הצדדים, אז הדבר תלוי בדעת החולה...

Three distinct categories of cases emerge, as law:

- 1) Where there are clear grounds to believe that all people would want such treatment, then we say that his view is cancelled before that of all people, and we compel him, under [the mitzvah of] "You shall protect your lives."
- 2) Where there are grounds to believe that all people would not want such treatment, then we say that his view is cancelled before that of all people, and we may not torture him with treatment, even should he wish it.
- 3) And where there are no clear grounds supporting either side, then it depends on the view of the patient...

#### Vignette #4: Shaming

##### 34. Talmud, Bava Metziah 58b

"[ו]לא תוננו איש את עמיתו" (ויקרא כה:יז) באונאת דברים. הא כיצד? אם היה בעל תשובה אל יאמר לו "זכור מעשיך הראשונים", אם היה בן גרים אל יאמר לו "זכור מעשה אבותיך", אם היה גר ובא ללמוד תורה אל יאמר לו "פה שאכל נבילות וטריפות, שקצים ורמשים בא ללמוד תורה שנאמרה מפי הגבורה." אם היו יסורין באין עליו, אם היו חלאים באין עליו, או שהיה מקבר את בניו, אל יאמר לו כדרך שאמרו לו חביריו לאיוב, "הלא יראתך כסלתך, תקותך ותם דרכיך זכר נא מי הוא נקי אבד."

"And you shall not abuse each other (Vayikra 25:17)" – This is verbal abuse. How? If he had repented, he should not say to him, "Remember your first deeds." If he was descended from people who had converted, he should not say to him, "Remember your parents' deeds." If he had converted, and he had now come to learn Torah, he should not say to him, "The mouth that ate non-kosher will now learn the Torah spoken by the mouth of Gd!" If he is suffering, if he is ill, or he buries his children, one should not say to him as his friends said to Job, "Your reverence is your confidence [or: foolishness], your hope and the end of your path. Remember: Who is innocent and is destroyed?"

#### Vignette #5: Planning to Discontinue After Marriage

##### 35. Rabbi Yehudah haChasid (12<sup>th</sup> century Germany), *Sefer Chasidim* 507

לא יכסה אדם מום בני ביתו, אם צריכים בניו או קרוביו להזדווג אם יש להם חולי שאלו היו יודעים אותם המזדווגים עמהם אותו חולי לא היו מזדווגים יגלה להם, פן יאמרו קדושי טעות היו.

One may not conceal the blemish of a member of his household if his children or relatives need to find a mate, if they have an illness which, were it revealed, would cause their mates not to join with them. This is lest they say that the marriage was based on error.