

Title: Co-designing a patient self-guided toolkit to improve eating habits after bariatric surgery: A quality improvement initiative

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Background: Background: The Bariatric Surgery Program (BSP) at the University Health Network (UHN) achieves strong surgical outcomes, however, a quality gap remains in addressing post-operative psychological and behavioural concerns. An estimated 20–40% of bariatric patients experience disordered eating behaviours within 6–24 months post-surgery, often linked to emotional dysregulation, psychological distress and weight regain. Access to timely psychosocial care is limited, with approximately 30% of post-operative patients waitlisted for 8–12 months. This gap poses patient safety and health equity concerns. This quality improvement (QI) project aimed to co-design an accessible, patient-informed self-guided toolkit to support self-management and improve continuity of post-operative care.

Methods: Using a co-design framework, bariatric patients, clinicians, and interdisciplinary stakeholders collaborated through patient focus groups and team working groups. Toolkit content was informed by patient’s lived experiences, evidence-based research on bariatric surgery and cognitive-behavioral therapy, mindfulness-based frameworks. QI methodology included Plan–Do–Study–Act cycles, and qualitative analysis of participant responses to toolkit components.

Results: Preliminary findings show patients reported improved confidence in managing eating habits after bariatric surgery and increased helpfulness of the toolkit. Clinicians highlighted the toolkit’s feasibility for integration into standard bariatric follow-up care.

Conclusions: This patient co-designed, self-guided toolkits represents a feasible and scalable approach to addressing psychosocial needs in bariatric populations. This toolkit helps bridge gaps in psychosocial support that contribute to patient safety and health equity concerns across the post-operative trajectory, including periods of heightened vulnerability and ongoing behaviour change.

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