

Characteristics of patients who underwent bariatric surgery and did not participate in a supervised post-operative exercise program

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Aim

Physical activity after bariatric surgery has multiple benefits, yet participation in supervised post-operative exercise programs remains suboptimal. We aimed to describe the characteristics of adults living with obesity who declined a supervised exercise program after bariatric surgery and to explore their reasons for non-participation.

Methods

We conducted a single-centre retrospective cohort study using medical records of adults who underwent bariatric surgery at Hôtel-Dieu de Sherbrooke (Quebec) between May 2023 and March 2025. Program participation was defined as attending ≥ 1 supervised session. A qualitative component included semi-structured telephone interviews with non-participants (n=15).

Results

Among 193 patients, 122 (63%) did not participate. Perioperative characteristics were largely comparable between groups. Non-participants lived farther from the training centre (median 52.4 km vs 13.2 km; $p=0.0018$) and more frequently had dyslipidaemia (38.52% vs 12.68%; $p=0.0001$) and asthma (27.87% vs 11.27%; $p=0.0068$) than participants. In interviews, the most common barrier was scheduling conflicts/personal responsibilities (10/15); distance was less frequently cited (4/15). Suggested improvements included extended opening hours (8/15); 7/15 would have been more likely to participate if sessions were offered virtually.

Conclusions

Non-participants tended to live farther from the training site and had a higher prevalence of dyslipidaemia and asthma. Qualitative findings highlighted modifiable logistical barriers (hours, virtual delivery) that may increase program uptake.

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