A pharmacist’s perspective on the management and prevention of obesity in adults and children: Is physical activity still relevant

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Background: Overweight and/or obese individuals present themselves regularly to Canadian pharmacists asking for a medication to treat obesity, which does not require physical exertion. These overweight and/or obese individuals may also ask a pharmacist’s insight on a product marketed as being effective in rapidly causing weight loss without physical activity.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to evaluate the role of physical activity in preventing and/or managing obesity in adults and children versus pharmacotherapy and alternative medicine.

Methods: A comprehensive evaluation was performed of all available literature on the management of obesity in adults and children. The 2006 Canadian Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Obesity in Adults and Children were emphasized. A conclusion was drawn on the significance of physical activity versus pharmacotherapy and alternative medicine.

Results: So far, an agreement has been reached that physical activity is considered the first line treatment option for overweight and obese patients. Physical activity should be maintained even after pharmacotherapy is initiated. Medication failure rates are high when physical activity is missing.

Conclusion: Despite the availability of numerous medications for weight loss coupled with the existence of multiple homeopathic treatment options for overweight and obesity, physical activity still remains the first treatment option for overweight and obesity— that should be maintained even after pharmacotherapy initiation.

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