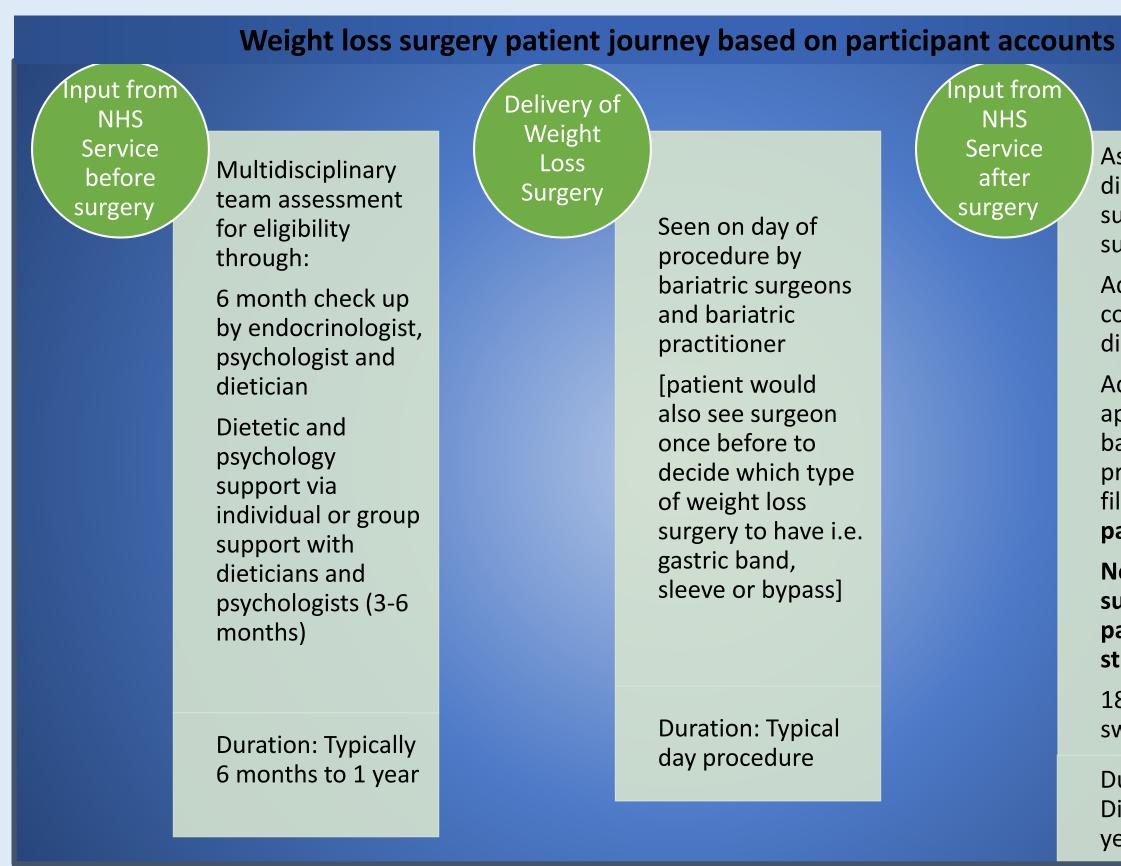


Patients' experience of life after weight loss surgery: psychological adjustment

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Background: Little is known about the psychological impact weight loss surgery has on people's life.¹ A recent systematic review in this area showed some persisting disordered psychosocial wellbeing after the procedure when compared to control groups, especially *'initially I lost loads of weight and because it* after longer term follow up typically beyond 4 years.² This highlighted potential need for happened so fast I don't know but the visual perception and the brain's vision of the self was really psychological support and more research on long term psychological wellbeing after odd. Because I knew I was losing weight but when weight loss surgery. Even clearer from the review was the lack of patient perspective on you look in the mirror you still see that fat person even when you're not and it takes time. I used to the lived experience of having weight loss surgery which left a gap in knowledge around walk past and think "Who the heck is that walking their needs following the procedure. For that reason, it was felt generating detailed past with me" and not realise it was me because I was so used to seeing someone twice the size and information of the postoperative weight loss surgery experience would be useful to as I say that that's something maybe that people pre 'I feel like I have provide health professionals evidence on this patient group's psychological wellbeing surgery ought to be more aware of because it does done it on my own ... take time' (Gail) you do feel like they after weight loss surgery, their stance on the need for psychological support, and if don't equip you 'It was a big learning curve I think. relevant, what their ideal psychological support would be. enough really' You know, trying to push the band a (Fran) 'Like I can't eat anything little bit because I think could I eat doughy, bread, anything that? Could I get away with that? Study aim: To explore people's long term life experiences after weight loss surgery by like that. All the things I Then you think 'oh no, that's too discussing their perceived benefits and limitations of having the procedure, and whether shouldn't eat I can't painful', I will never do that again. But because it gets stuck and you do. It does take a year or 18 their expectations were realised. it's really painful' (Anna) months to actually get used to what your body can take and what it won't. Methods: Ten individuals who had weight loss surgery between 2 and 6 years ago were (Anna) recruited within an NHS bariatric surgery service through purposeful sampling and Adjustment takes time **Enforced adjustment**

individually interviewed by the researcher. The semi-structured interviews were subsequently transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis.



References: [1] Kubik JF, Gill RS, Laffin M & Karmali S (2013) The Impact of Bariatric Surgery on Psychological Health, Journal of Obesity, Volume 2013, Article ID 837989, http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2013/837989 [2] Jumbe S, Bartlett C, Jumbe SL & Meyrick J (2016) The effectiveness of bariatric surgery on long term psychosocial quality of life – A systematic review, Obesity Researc & Clinical Practice, doi:10.1016/j.orcp.2015.11.009 [3] Kathleen M. Stolzenberger, Chris Ann Meaney, Patty Marteka, Sarah Korpak, and Kristen Morello. Bariatric Surgical Practice and Patient Care. March 2013, 8(1): 29-38. doi:10.1089/bari.2013.9996. [4] Staalsen T, Falgevik Olsen M, Elander A (2013) Experience of Excess Skin and Desire for Body Contouring Surgery in Post-bariatric Patients, Obesity Surgery, 23(10), 1632–1644 [5] Klopper (2014) Massive weight loss after bariatric surgery and the demand (desire) for body contouring surgery, European Journal of Plastic Surgery, 37(2), 103–108

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Participant quotes on adjustment following weight loss surgery

- Assessed for discharge by surgeon on day of surgery
- Ad-hoc patient led contact with dietician
- Ad-hoc appointments with bariatric practitioner for fills (Gastric bands patients only)

No psychology support unless patient reports as struggling

18 months swallow test

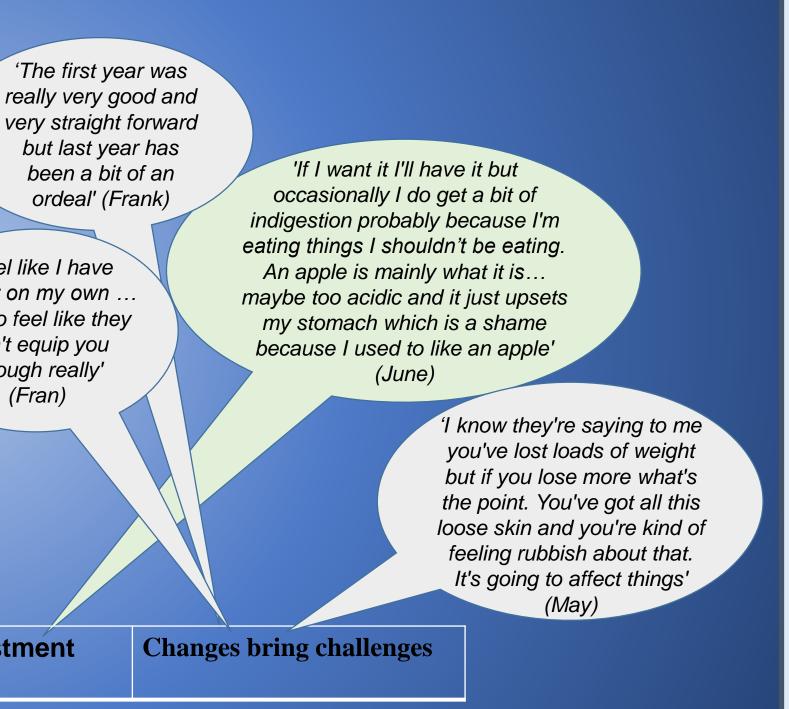
Duration: Discharged at 2 years

Findings

- All participants reported drastic weight loss and improvements in a range of co-morbidities within the first year. This coincided with better psychological and social function.
- Despite evident weight loss, participants described a gradual process a year after surgery, presenting physical and psychological changes that were challenging to deal with alone. This was amplified by the lack of routine follow up from the Bariatric Surgery Service
- Only one out of the ten participants saw a psychologist after weight loss surgery because they were struggling. Six participants would have seen a psychologist if it was part of routine follow up but were put off because they had to 'ask for it'. They did not want to be seen as a burden to the NHS
- In hindsight, a majority of the group felt psychological support was needed to better equip people for the subsequent changes experienced after having weight loss surgery, irrespective of positive weight loss progress.
- Specifically, two issues of psychological adjustment were highlighted. The first was around psychological acceptance of a (new) 'non-obese' identity following drastic weight loss.³ The second was aesthetic impairment caused by distress from excess skin, which ironically developed as a result of drastic weight loss from the surgical intervention originally intended to help tackle body image concerns of obesity.^{4,5}

Discussion

Overall weight loss surgery is a good catalyst for weight loss in severe obesity. However, this surgical tool needs to go hand in hand with psychological support in the post-surgery phase to achieve optimum results.¹ In relation to appearance issues, there is potential for health psychology interventions to help patients adjust to both the physical and mental changes that come with drastic weight loss following the procedure.



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