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Surgery may lower mortality rate for obese adults: Singapore study

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Survival benefits are much more pronounced for people with pre-existing diabetes than those without



Adults with severe obesity who undergo metabolic-bariatric surgery (MBS) to lose weight, may have substantially lower mortality rates and longer life expectancy compared to those who tried to lose weight through conventional obesity management.

The study findings by a team of clinicians and researchers from the National University Hospital (NUH)Ã¯Â¼â?º NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health (SSHSPH) and NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (NUS Medicine) are published in the prestigious medical journal The Lancet in May.

The meta-analysis estimated a life expectancy gain of approximately six years among patients who underwent MBS compared to those who tried to lose weight through usual care (defined as medications, diet and exercise).

In fact, the analysis found that MBS could lower the risk of death by 60% for patients with obesity and diabetes and 30% for those without.

“In Singapore and many parts of the world, eligible patients are often reluctant to go for MBS - for fear of surgery, complications and prolonged recovery process. But we can perform MBS via keyhole procedure nowadays and in most cases, patients will be discharged within two to three days. Based on this study, MBS can bring about significant benefits in the long run for patients with obesity and especially those who also suffer from diabetes,” explained Assistant Professor Shabbir, who is also the Director of the Centre for Obesity Management and Surgery at NUH.

Associate Professor Tai Bee Choo from SSHSPH, emphasised that: “MBS is not a magic bullet and patients would still need to maintain a healthy lifestyle and diet even after surgery. Subsequent weight control through behavioural and lifestyle modifications is important for lowering disease risk.”