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In Reply

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Trends in the negative health consequences of overweight and obesity are on the rise, coinciding with trends in rates of obesity. It is therefore not surprising that obesity accounts for a significant portion of health care costs in the United States.¹ As Dr Chen and his colleagues point out, our Viewpoint emphasized the opportunities for comprehensive approaches to preventing obesity-related cancers within health care settings. To achieve significant effect on obesity and obesity-related cancers, all tools of the medical and public health community must be brought to bear on the problem. Chen and colleagues propose bariatric surgery as a treatment for severe obesity and a strategy for cancer prevention for eligible patients. As they note, achieving sustainable weight loss among patients with overweight and obesity presents significant challenges. For these reasons, efforts to prevent further weight gain among those who are not yet obese—and would not be eligible for surgery or other invasive medical approaches to treating overweight—are critical. For patients with obesity who have not been successful in losing weight, health care professionals can consider a variety of strategies that meet patients' needs, including surgical approaches. Data such as those cited by the authors provide empirical links between interventions for overweight or obesity and associations with cancer outcomes. Such findings can inform understanding of the links among weight, weight gain and loss, and cancer.

Bariatric surgery is a recognized treatment option for some individual patients with severe obesity.² However, considerations regarding access to health care, cost, reach, and health care capacity must be taken into account in addressing the burden of overweight and obesity and their effect on health outcomes. The benefits of maintaining a healthy weight include improvements in a wide variety of health outcomes, including cancer.³ To expand the breadth of these benefits at the population level, public health and health care must work together to integrate prevention, intervention, and treatment.

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