



American Society for Metabolic & Bariatric Surgery

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NJ GOVERNOR CHRIS CHRISTIE SPARKS NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON OBESITY

***American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS)
Comments on What's Missing from the Conversation***

GAINESVILLE, FL -- May 10, 2013 -- The revelation earlier this week that New Jersey Governor Chris Christie had weight loss surgery made headlines throughout the world. Much was made of why he had it, which procedure he had, how quickly he would lose the weight and what it would mean for his political future. All valid areas of exploration and speculation.

One critical question, however, was left unasked and unanswered. What does it mean for the millions of Americans who suffer with the same disease of obesity, but do not have access to the same care Governor Christie received? More than 35 percent of adults in the United States are considered obeseⁱ and it is estimated 24 million have severe obesity. What happens to them?

Many health insurance policies specifically exclude the treatment of obesity and severe obesity. When the Affordable Care Act goes into effect next year, it is believed that only five state health exchanges will cover weight loss programs and only 22 will cover weight loss surgery.

"Society as a whole has to change its thinking about obesity and begin to remove the policy, social, medical, discriminatory, economic and perceptual barriers that deny people appropriate treatment and support across the spectrum of obesity," said Jaime Ponce, MD, president of the ASMBS. "Governor Christie made an important personal decision to take control over his obesity. Now it's time for our health care system to make that same option for treatment available to all people who suffer from the disease of obesity."

Governor Christie said when he turned 50 in September he was "confronted" by his own "mortality" and for the sake of his wife and children he "needed to take a more significant step to try to get my weight under control so that I could have a really active next half of my life."

Individuals with obesity have a 50 to 100 percent increased risk of premature death compared to healthy weight individuals.ⁱⁱ The disease of obesity has been linked to more than 30 other diseases including type 2 diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers.

"We cannot operate our way out of the obesity crisis. We must work together to prevent the obesity epidemic from continuing to grow. At the same time, we need to provide solutions to help those already affected with safe and proven treatments, and treat them with respect and dignity. America's future is depending on it," said John Morton, MD, ASMBS Secretary-Treasurer, Access Chair and Associate Professor of Surgery at Stanford University.

About the ASMBS

The ASMBS is the largest organization for bariatric and metabolic surgeons and integrated health professionals in the world. It is a non-profit organization that works to advance the art and science of bariatric surgery and is committed to educating medical professionals and the lay public about bariatric surgery as an option for the treatment of morbid obesity, as well as the associated risks and benefits. It encourages its members to investigate and discover new advances in bariatric surgery, while maintaining a steady exchange of experiences and ideas that may lead to improved surgical outcomes for patients with morbid obesity. For more information, visit www.asmb.org.

ⁱ <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db82.pdf>

ⁱⁱ http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/calls/obesity/fact_consequences.html