

## 30<sup>th</sup> European Congress on Obesity, 17-20 May 2023, Dublin, Ireland

The European Association for the Study of Obesity requires use of person-first language and non-stigmatizing images in all written and verbal communications.

### Person-first Language

The use of person-first language is the standard for respectfully addressing individuals living with chronic diseases; we don't label people because of their illness.

#### Examples:

Non-Person-first Language	Person-first Language
Obese participants	Participants with obesity or participants living with obesity
Obese person	Person with obesity or person living with obesity
Morbidly obese patient	Patient with severe obesity or patient living with severe obesity
Hypertensive patient	Patient with hypertension or patient living with hypertension
Diabetics	People with diabetes or people living with diabetes
Demented individual	Person with dementia or individual living with dementia
Obese subjects	Participants with obesity

### Non-stigmatizing Images

Unfortunately, many public images portray individuals living with obesity in a negative manner. To reduce pejorative portrayals of persons living with obesity, presenters must use non-stigmatizing images. The European Coalition for People Living with Obesity offers an open access image bank that portrays individuals with obesity in ways that are positive and non-stereotypical. These images provide fair and non-biased representation of youth and adults living with obesity <https://ecpomed.org/image-bank/>. Using non-stigmatizing images in research can help challenge harmful weight-based stereotypes.

## **Why does this matter?**

People living with obesity experience bias and stigma across their lifespan and across settings (home, schools, workplaces, media, public spaces, and healthcare environments). Obesity stigma is enacted through social stereotypes about people with obesity. Some stereotypes include:

- People with obesity are lazy, unmotivated, lacking will power, unsuccessful, ugly, and unintelligent.
- Patients with obesity are non-compliant with healthcare recommendations.
- Individuals with obesity do not exercise.
- Individuals with obesity do not eat healthily.

These stereotypes can lead to individuals being treated unfairly in school, the workplace, and healthcare settings. For example, teachers who enact these weight-based stereotypes may have lower expectations from students with a higher weight and may provide fewer learning opportunities to children living with obesity. This can affect children's educational outcomes and life chances. Experiencing weight stigma has significant consequences for both health and socio-economic well-being. Studies show that weight stigma can increase morbidity and mortality independently of a person's weight or BMI.

EASO works actively to reduce weight stigma and weight-based discrimination, and believes researchers, healthcare professionals, and policy makers must challenge negative stereotypes about obesity and about people with obesity; all of us should promote non-biased, inclusive language, communications, and practices.