WELLNESS RX SPECIAL REPORT: HOPE FOR OBESITY

About 1/3rd of all Americans are deemed obese or are about 30% or more above their ideal body weight. For many it is about eating a poor diet, overeating, especially when dealing with anxiety or daily stress, or lack of daily exercise.

But there are many individuals, especially those severely obese, who eat right, exercise daily and still experience little success losing weight. A recent 60 minutes story reported that this group is not only dealing with a chronic disease, but also with genetics. So, no matter what they do, they can't lose weight and most become diabetic and experience health care costs far exceeding the norm. Emotionally, they also struggle especially when others often see them as just not having enough "will power". It hurts.

Two new injectable medications are offering help to this population. Both medications, Ozempic and Wegovy, contain the same active ingredient (semaglutide) and are made by the same manufacturer (Novo Nordisk). Ozempic is highly advertised as an approved medication for diabetes and Wegovy is approved for weight management at a **higher dose.** Both injectables are SC or under the skin administration taken once weekly. Ozempic costs about $800 a month and Wegovy about $1,300 a month. Most insurances are now paying for Ozempic and reimbursement for Wegovy is becoming hotly debated between public and private insurance carriers, employers and health professionals as a medication that can both reduce long term health costs , improve quality of life for patients and improve employee productivity.

The early results for both medications have been impressive. Wegovy, in particular, is helping obese patients lose between **12-20% of their body weight within months of use.** Side effects have been nausea, vomiting and constipation which appear to go away with continuing use. It is recommended that Wegovy be taken for about **16 months to see maximum results**, but there is no guarantee that success will remain even with a proper diet and exercise. So, one should look at the injectable similar to insulin or insulin-like medications which are often taken regularly throughout one's life.

The injectables work by mimicking or enhancing the amount of glucagon into the bloodstream. Glucagon is a natural hormone which is produced in the intestines in response to food intake. Glucagon controls appetite, blood sugar, intestinal movement and helps to secrete more insulin from the pancreas.