



COALITION CONTRE
l'obésité morbide

PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

Waiting periods for bariatric surgery

The Coalition against Morbid Obesity comments on waiting periods and appeals to Minister Yves Bolduc to demonstrate greater transparency

Montréal, December 14, 2010 – More than 18 months after the MSSS announced its action plan regarding bariatric surgery, the cofounders of the Coalition against Morbid Obesity (lepoidsquitue.com), Jennifer Schultz and Josée Roy, reviewed the current state of affairs during a press conference and confirmed that waiting periods for bariatric surgery have remained the same despite the fact that the number of surgical procedures has increased by 56% during the year. Those were the findings of the Coalition after conducting a survey of the ten hospitals where this procedure is performed in Quebec.

While it is true that there are more patients waiting for bariatric surgery, they will unfortunately have to wait up to seven years before actually getting to the operating room. The number of patients waiting for bariatric surgery has reached 6,000 people in 2010, from 4,800 in 2009, which is a 20% increase.

The Coalition found that the objective of the action plan to increase the number of bariatric surgeries over the next three years from 840 in 2009, to 1,500 in 2010, 2,250 in 2011 and 3,000 in 2012 is not yielding the expected result, which was to improve access to bariatric surgery.

“This action plan represents a significant breakthrough for the morbidly obese in Quebec. It acknowledges the importance of bariatric surgery, which is the only solution for people suffering from morbid obesity. Some people are not aware that they are morbidly obese and even less that bariatric surgery is an effective treatment for their condition. It is therefore frustrating to know that while a medically-validated and effective solution does exist, it is not easily accessible and remains mostly unknown to people suffering from morbid obesity,” explained Josée Roy.

Transparency and centralization of applications

The Coalition's cofounders asked Minister Bolduc to demonstrate greater transparency and to provide an accurate description of the current waiting periods for bariatric surgery in Quebec by disclosing the total number of bariatric surgical procedures performed in Quebec, as well as a breakdown per institution for 2010 and subsequent years. They also request that the Minister post on the MSSS Web site the waiting list for bariatric surgery, as it is currently the case for other surgical procedures (<http://wpp01.msss.gouv.qc.ca/appl/g74web/questionsfrequentes.asp>).

Furthermore, in order to provide an accurate picture of these waiting periods, and improve the accessibility and services offered to the morbidly obese, the Coalition suggests that a Quebec Bariatric Surgery Registry be created, like the one developed in Ontario. “This registry would log morbidly obese patients upon their entry into a surgery program, contrary to the current procedure, which is when they wait for their surgery,” clarified Jennifer Schultz. “The Coalition

includes more than 1,000 members and officially represents the morbidly obese in Quebec; we strongly wish to contribute more actively to the implementation of this action plan,” she added.

More funding for bariatric surgery

The Minister of Health and Social Services, Dr. Yves Bolduc, announced on December 9 that by 2013/2014, administrative costs in the sector of health care and social services will be cut back significantly in order to improve the care and services provided to the population. More than 300,000 Quebecers suffer from morbid obesity and the related health care costs are high. “The Coalition against Morbid Obesity hopes that further to this announcement, some of the funds resulting from these cutbacks are being allocated to bariatric surgery, the only effective treatment against morbid obesity,” expressed together the Coalition’s cofounders.

Morbid obesity

Morbid obesity is the starting point for different types of diseases that are often fatal, such as arterial hypertension, Type 2 diabetes, or heart disease. An individual’s obesity level can be evaluated by means of the body mass index (BMI), which is calculated by dividing the person’s weight by his or her height squared (Kg/m²). Morbid obesity corresponds to a BMI higher than or equal to 40, or higher than or equal to 35 if accompanied by comorbidities.

Bariatric surgery

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), bariatric surgery is considered to be the only effective treatment for morbid obesity. Bariatric surgery includes a series of techniques that are based on two intervention principles: gastric bypass (reduced volume) and intestinal malabsorption (derivation). In Québec in 2005, the *Agence d’évaluation des technologies et des modes d’intervention en santé* (AETMIS) tabled a report entitled “Surgical Treatment of Morbid Obesity – Update”, which reviews all of the bariatric surgery techniques. The AETMIS recommended establishing an action plan in Québec to define the need for bariatric surgery and devise ways to respond to it.

About the Coalition against Morbid Obesity

Created in February 2007, the Coalition against Morbid Obesity is a non-profit, Québec-based organization that draws on the strength of association to increase awareness of the issue of morbid obesity and to foster better access to bariatric surgery in Québec. Its signature, “Weight that kills”, expresses the dramatic situation that is experienced by people who are suffering from morbid obesity. As its name indicates, this disease leads to a faster death for those who are afflicted. For more information, visit www.lepoidsquitue.com.

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Members of the Coalition against Morbid Obesity have provided personal accounts of their life as they wait for bariatric surgery. To access the video, please click on:

<http://www.enigma.ca/fr/zone-medias.html>

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