

0049

The Perceived Need for Early Access to Support Programs by Bariatric Surgery Patients in Australia

Category: Integrated Health

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Previous research into the effectiveness of post-bariatric surgery support programs has shown that patients who take part in such programs tend to experience better health and psychological outcomes from surgery. A consecutive cohort of patients post bariatric surgery (Sleeve, Bypass and Band) who had completed at least 6 months of a post bariatric surgery lifestyle program (The Fresh Start Program) were asked to answer a subjective questionnaire on their experience by phone survey performed by independent reviewers. The program included regular group support calls, one on one coaching sessions, access to an online support forum and weekly healthy lifestyle resources delivered by email, under the guidance of experienced and qualified coaches and counsellors. Attempts were made to contact 84 patients of which 41 responded. 97.6% patients were satisfied with the program and would recommend the program to others and 97.6% said the program should remain in the surgical program for patients undergoing bariatric surgery. 92.7% felt that access to the program should start at the 3 month mark post surgery (as opposed to 6, 9, 12 or 18 months). Patients participating in the program also reported a range of challenges after their surgery (such as emotional eating, negative self-image, relationship issues, difficulties with time management, and other health issues), which impact on their progress. The results suggest that there is clear perceived benefit derived by patients from access to support programs and that access to such programs may be important in selecting a surgical program. It further supports the value of continuing collaboration and communication among those involved in the quest to achieve optimal outcomes for bariatric surgery patients.