




Obesity and Metabolic Surgery Society of India (OSSI) Recommendations for Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery Practice During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Sandeep Aggarwal¹  · Kamal Mahawar² · Manish Khaitan³ · Praveen Raj⁴ · Randeep Wadhawan⁵ · NandaKishore Dukkipati⁶ · Kuldeepak S Kular⁷ · Arun Prasad⁸ · Aparna Govil Bhasker⁹ · Vandana Soni¹⁰ · Brijesh Madhok¹¹ · Sarfaraz Baig¹² · Raj Palaniappan¹³ · H. V. Shivaram¹⁴ · Deep Goel¹⁵ · Vivek Bindal¹⁶ · Sukhvinder Saggu¹⁷ · Rajesh Shrivastava¹⁸ · Sumeet Shah¹⁹ · Shrihari Dhorepatil²⁰ · Rajesh Khullar²¹

Received: 26 May 2020 / Revised: 14 August 2020 / Accepted: 17 August 2020
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Abstract

Bariatric and metabolic surgery (BMS), the only effective option for patients with obesity with or without comorbidities, has been stopped temporarily due to the ongoing novel corona virus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. However, there has been a recent change in the governmental strategy of dealing with this virus from ‘Stay at Home’ to ‘Stay Alert’ in many countries including India. A host of health services including elective surgeries are being resumed. In view of the possibility of resumption of BMS in near future, Obesity and Metabolic Surgery Society of India (OSSI) constituted a committee of experienced surgeons to give recommendations about the requirements as well as precautions to be taken to restart BMS with emphasis on safe delivery and high-quality care.

Keywords Bariatric surgery · COVID-19 · Coronavirus · Resumption · Pandemic

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in postponement of all planned elective operations. Unfortunately, bariatric and metabolic surgery (BMS) has taken the worst brunt of the pandemic. Most centers have put a complete halt to new referrals and operations. Obesity is associated with several comorbidities including type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM), hypertension, and obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) [1]. Patients with obesity have an impaired immune response resulting in enhanced risk of various infections including COVID-19 [2]. Worryingly, the severity of COVID-19 is worse in patients suffering from obesity [3, 4]. As the BMS has been deferred due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the patients with obesity continue to suffer from its adverse consequences [5–7].

In view of the above and considering obesity and bariatric surgery to be of equal importance as other chronic life-threatening diseases and cancer, the Obesity and Metabolic Surgery Society of India (OSSI) decided to frame recommendations which will help bariatric surgeons to prepare for the possible recommencement of bariatric surgery in the near future. These recommendations are predominantly based on the opinion of experts given the paucity of data on this subject. The published recommendations by several national and international societies were also taken in account while compiling these [8–11].

Resuming BMS—Safety First

Patients with obesity have a higher risk of morbidity/mortality should they develop COVID-19 infection [3, 4]. This will hold true for the perioperative period too as the patient is still obese in the immediate perioperative period [12]. Thus, the aim of these recommendations is to accord the highest priority to the safety of patients and healthcare workers (HCW) while resuming BMS. This

✉ Sandeep Aggarwal
sandeep_aiims@yahoo.co.in

Extended author information available on the last page of the article