



MONASH  
Faculty of  
Medicine,  
Nursing and  
Health Sciences



# Obesity as a disease

## *A controversial idea*

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**theAlfred**



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# Definition of “DISEASE”

*An abnormal condition that affects the structure or function of part or all of the body and is usually associated with specific signs and symptoms (NIH)*

Aetiological factors

Change cell physiology

Change tissue function

Change organ function

Change body function

**“Normal”**

**Disease**

# Is obesity a “DISEASE”

*An abnormal condition that affects the structure or function of part or all of the body and is usually associated with specific signs and symptoms (NIH)*

*abnormal condition* ?

*affects structure or function* ✓

*signs and symptoms* ✓

# Is obesity a “DISEASE”?

Aetiological factors

Change cell physiology

Change tissue function

Change organ function

Change body function

**“Normal”**

**Disease**

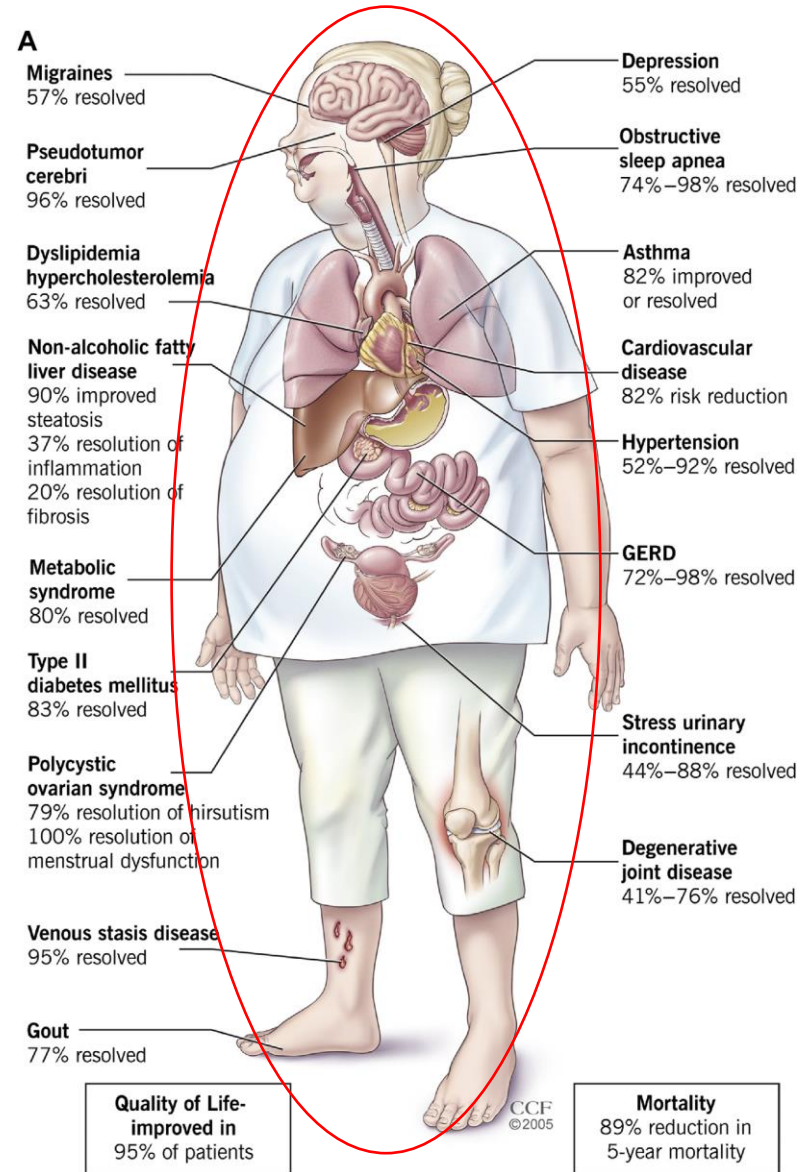
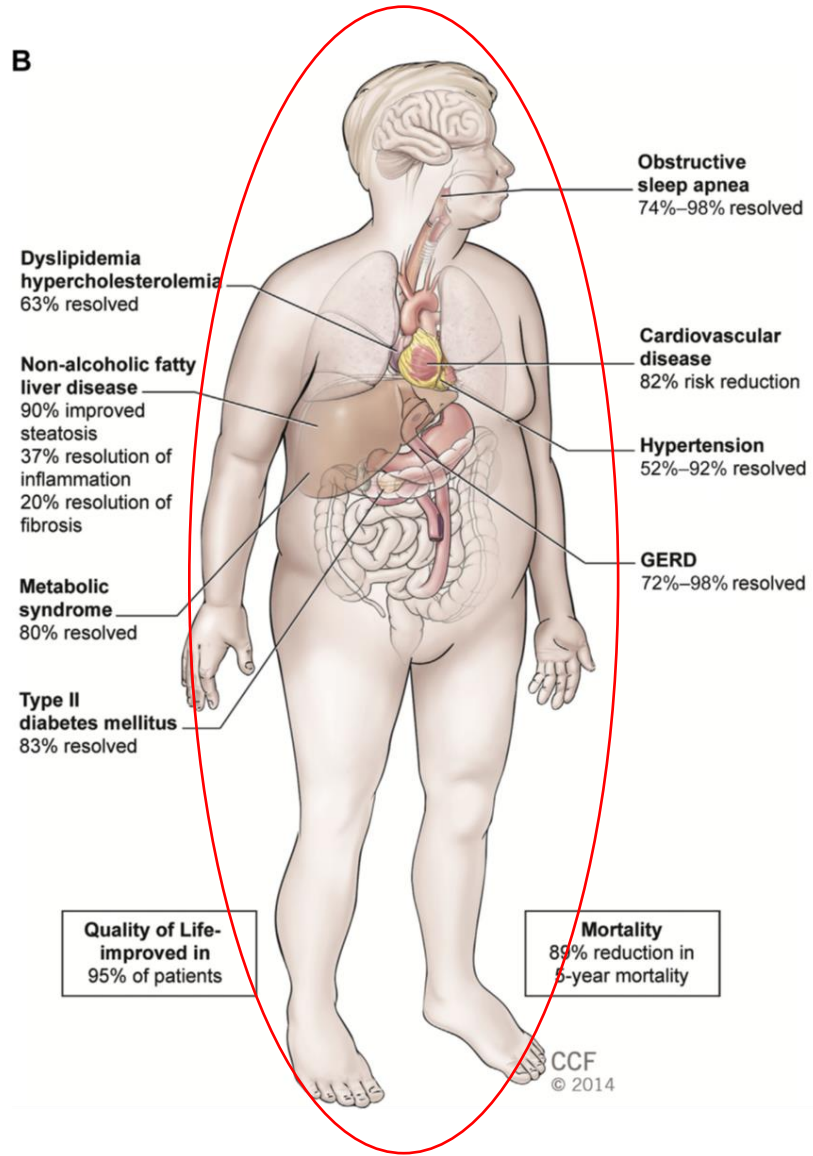
Genetic  
Environment  
Hormonal  
Epigenetic  
Meds

Adiposity

Inflammation  
Endocrine  
Metabolic  
Mechanical

Liver  
Pancreas  
ETC

Obesity



**Symptoms and Signs OR Interconnected diseases**

*Fouse & Brethauer, Surgical Clin Nth America, 2016*

# The Idea of Obesity as a Disease Remains Controversial

The New York Times

## *A.M.A. Recognizes Obesity as a Disease*

World Obesity Federation Position Statement

## **Obesity: a chronic relapsing progressive disease process. A position statement of the World Obesity Federation**

*Received 6 March 2017; accepted 20 March 2017*

OBESITY OUTLOOK

## PERSPECTIVE



## Obesity is not a disease

The misguided urge to pathologize this condition reflects society's failure to come to terms with the need for prevention, says **D. L. Katz**.

European Journal of Clinical Nutrition (2017), 1–5  
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[www.nature.com/ejcn](http://www.nature.com/ejcn)

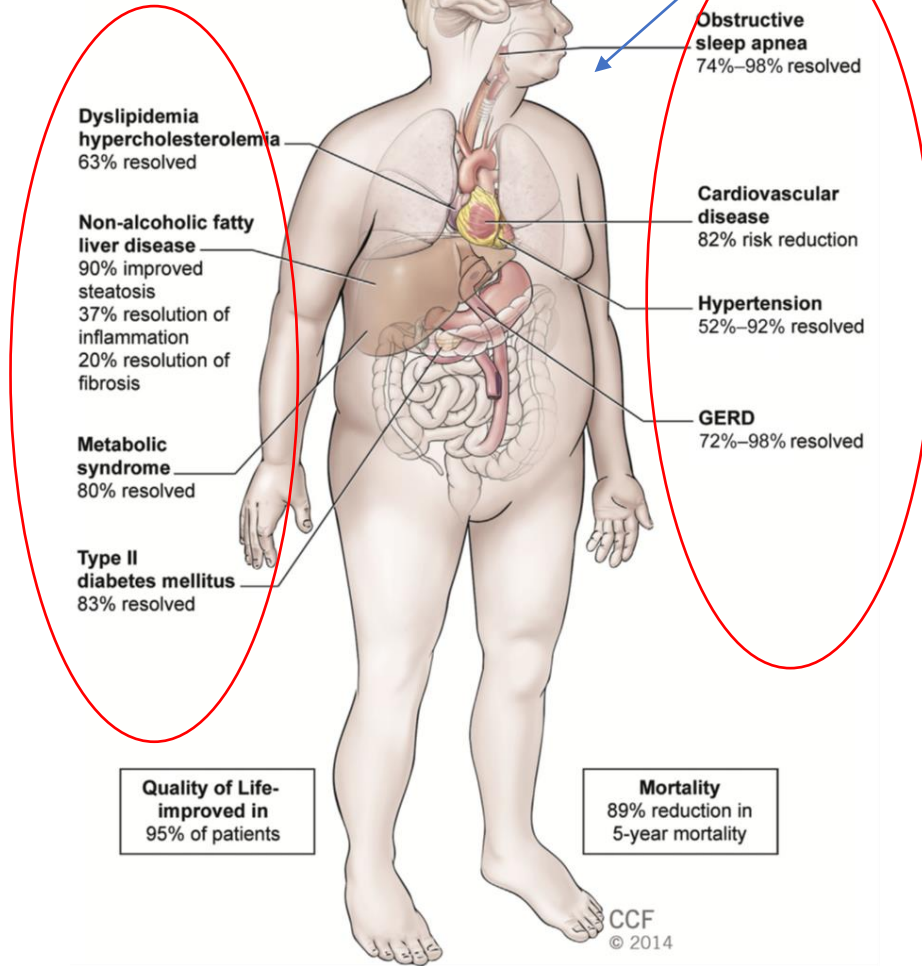
## REVIEW

## Should Europe follow the US and declare obesity a disease?: a discussion of the so-called utilitarian argument

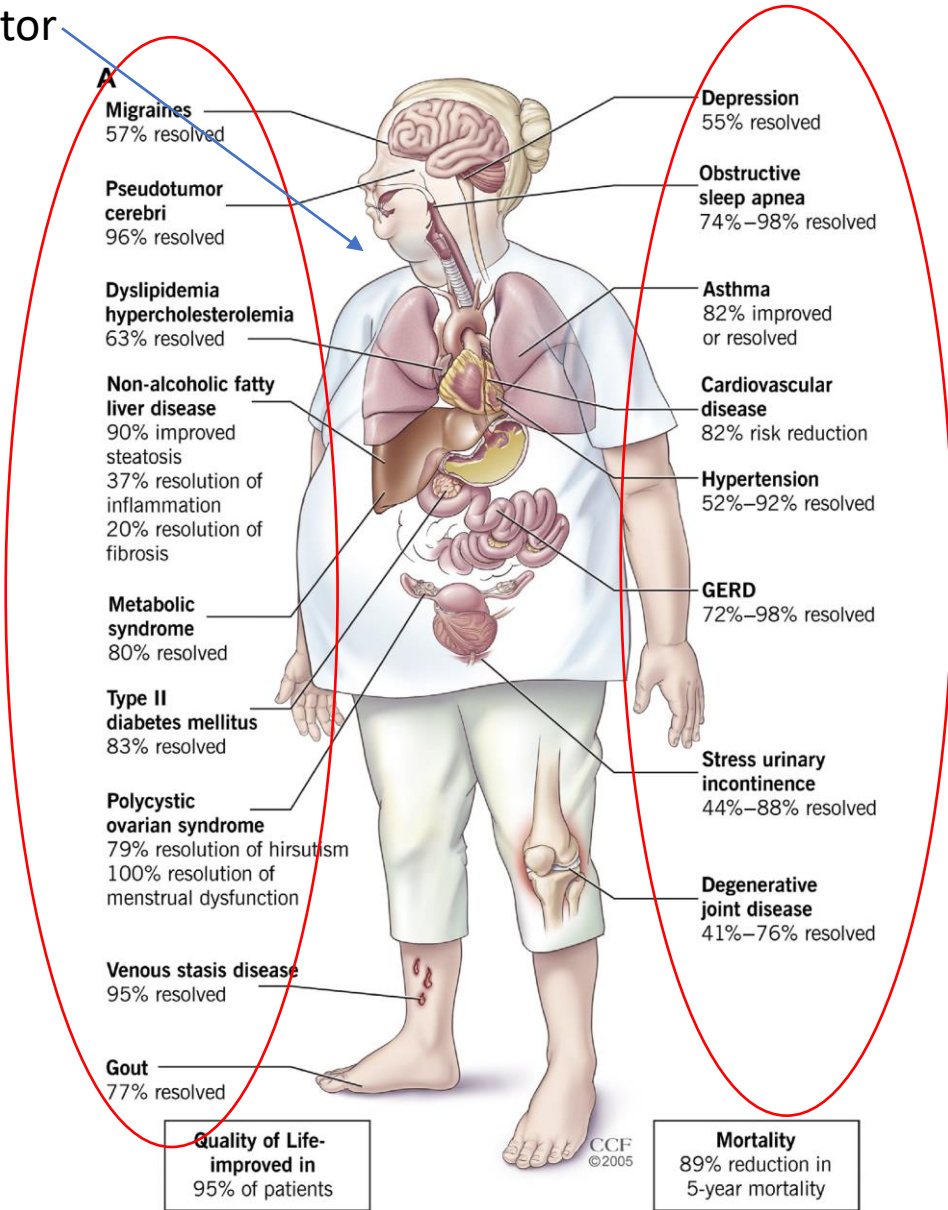
S Vallgård<sup>1</sup>, MEJ Nielsen<sup>2,3</sup>, AKK Hansen<sup>4</sup>, K ÓCathaoir<sup>5</sup>, M Hartlev<sup>5</sup>, L Holm<sup>2</sup>, BJ Christensen<sup>2</sup>, JD Jensen<sup>2</sup>, TIA Sørensen<sup>1,6,7</sup> and P Sandøe<sup>2,8</sup>

# Risk Factor

**B**



**A**



*Fouse & Brethauer, Surgical Clin Nth America, 2016*



# Definition of “HEALTH”

*A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.*

*The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition (WHO)*



***Can you have a disease and also be healthy?***

# Conclusion

*Should we consider obesity as a disease?*

- Obesity fulfils the definition of a disease
- Obesity also fulfils the definition of a risk-factor
  - Concept of health confounds the discussion
- Should obesity be considered differently to other conditions where this is also true?
  - Diabetes: Vascular disease, Heart Disease, Neuropathy, Ulcers etc
  - Hypertension: Heart Disease, Stroke, Aneurysms, Renal Disease etc
  - Scleroderma: Oesophagitis, Dysmotility, Joint Disease, Lung Disease etc
- If so, why?

# Acknowledgements

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