

A comparison of primary care resource utilization before and after bariatric surgery in Ontario

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Purpose: To determine whether the number of patient visits to family physicians decreases in the 3-year period following bariatric surgery, as compared to the 3-year period prior to surgery.

Methods: A population-based, retrospective cohort study of patients who underwent Roux-en-Y gastric bypass (RYGB) or sleeve gastrectomy (SG) in publicly funded Ontario hospitals between January 1st, 2010 and December 31st, 2012. Data was obtained from the Canadian Institute for Health Information. The paired t-test, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test and the McNemar's test were used for univariable analyses. The Poisson regression accounting for dependence was used for multivariable analyses.

Results: A total of 6416 patients met inclusion criteria with 5947 RYGB (92.7%) and 469 SG patients (7.3%). There was no difference in the median number of patient visits to their family physician within the 1-year period prior to surgery as compared to the 1-year period following surgery (4 vs. 4, $p=0.58$). However, there was a statistically significant decrease in the median number of patient visits in the 1-2 year period (5 vs. 3, $p < 0.0001$) as well as the 2-3 year period before and after surgery (4 vs. 3, $p < 0.0001$). When combining the corresponding 1-2 year and 2-3 year periods before and after surgery, there was a 19% decrease in family physician visits following bariatric surgery (CI 0.79 – 0.82, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: In Ontario, patients who undergo bariatric surgery visit their family physicians less in the 1-2 year and 2-3 year periods after surgery, as compared to the corresponding time periods before surgery.

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