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2ND NATIONAL OBESITY SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

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Multidisciplinary Primary Care Management of Obesity as a Chronic Relapsing Neurobehavioral Disease During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Report

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Introduction:
Obesity is a chronic, relapsing neurobehavioral disease associated with metabolic, cardiovascular and sleep-related complications. Effective management requires recognition of its biological, behavioural and environmental drivers. The COVID-19 pandemic further amplified sedentary behaviour, psychological stress and healthcare access limitations. This case, managed between 2020 and 2022 during the pandemic, illustrates the challenges of delivering holistic obesity care in a period with limited obesity management medication (OMM) options.

Methods:
A longitudinal follow-up was conducted for a 29-year-old man with morbid obesity (BMI 47.5 kg/m^2), hypertension, hyperlipidaemia and suspected obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). Management was delivered in a university-based primary care clinic. Interventions included structured lifestyle counselling using the Malaysian Healthy Plate (Quarter-Quarter-Half), behavioural reinforcement, pharmacotherapy with orlistat—the only accessible OMM at the time—multidisciplinary referrals (dietician, sports physician, otorhinolaryngologist), and integration of digital self-monitoring tools and peer-support platforms. Serial anthropometric, clinical and laboratory parameters were reviewed.

Results:
The patient initially achieved a 6 kg weight reduction over six months with structured lifestyle intervention. Following further structured intervention including pharmacotherapy, he lost an additional 5.8 kg within three months, with improvement in lipid profile and liver enzymes. However, pandemic-related occupational stress, movement restrictions and reduced accountability led to weight regain, peaking at 142.5 kg, highlighting obesity's relapsing trajectory. Re-engagement through family-supported meal planning, online fitness coaching and social accountability restored weight reduction and improved blood pressure stability.

Conclusion:
This case highlights obesity as a chronic, relapsing disease that requires sustained therapeutic alliance, multidisciplinary care and behavioural support. While pharmacotherapy can support early weight reduction, long-term success depends on holistic, patient-centred strategies addressing biological, environmental and psychosocial factors. During the COVID-19 era with limited OMM availability, holistic, patient-centred strategies with comprehensive primary care support were crucial in sustaining progress and addressing biological vulnerability, environmental disruption and psychosocial challenges.