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Urgent need to create awareness for obesity as medical concern

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OBESITY, defined by the World Health Organization as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation, is a disease that leads to life-altering and potentially fatal consequences.

It is the gateway to heart disease, various types of cancer and diabetes. Six out of 12 obesity-related cancers are rising fastest among the millennial age group.

In the Philippines alone, 33.2 million individuals live with this disease. These cases are clustered in urban areas, namely Metro and Mega Manila, Cebu and Central Visayas, and Davao and Northern Mindanao.

Research has shown a correlation between obesity and mental health problems. Published data documents a 55-percent increased risk of developing depression over time in people with obesity, while people who were depressed had a 58-percent increased risk of developing obesity.

Obesity increases the risk of developing severe Covid-19 symptoms and triples the risk of requiring hospitalization. Additionally, an individual with obesity may have an impaired immune system and decreased lung capacity, which can make ventilation more difficult. There is a need to create awareness for obesity as a medical concern. It is important to educate Filipinos about how obesity is a disease that interrupts the metabolic, biomechanical, and mental health of a person. Heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and the higher incidence of stroke, all begin with obesity.

Finally, it's important to separate the person from the disease. They are not obese people but rather, people with obesity. The first step to healing and the right path to wellness is awareness and acceptance, and that obesity, while a challenge, can be solved.