

Setting the Record Straight: an EASO statement on transparency

EASO notes recent scrutiny and media coverage around pharmaceutical industry support for obesity organisations and the Novo Nordisk UK suspension from the UK Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (APBI).

Like many biomedical associations in Europe and globally, EASO receives funding from various sources. These include membership fees; research grants; annual congress surplus and corporate support. All income received is articulated in our annually audited accounts, which are submitted to the Charities Commission and Companies House (England and Wales), and Companies Registration Office (Ireland). Income is presented according to the accepted format of charitable accounts, meaning that we list total income per category rather than as individual payments. We report all individual payments at our AGM to the EASO General Council, which is our membership of 36 National Associations across Europe. Support from any external funder is acknowledged in all projects funded with resources from these partners. This refers specifically to projects funded by industry and EU-funded projects (H2020 and Horizon Europe frameworks). Support is acknowledged in the standard way for biomedical organisations like EASO. Partner companies are listed on the EASO website. Support EASO receives from industry comes in the form of unrestricted educational grants or event sponsorship and is governed by audited grant agreements. Industry partners are not involved in EASO project planning, agenda setting or decision making. All details regarding Association funding is publicly available, and EASO volunteers do not accept personal remuneration for their work.

We have been asked in recent days why we 'support obesity medications'. We do not, and never have, supported any specific obesity drug (or surgical technique, or functional food, for that matter). EASO supports access to and availability of all types of evidence based care for people living with obesity. We do not specifically endorse one type of intervention over another, and as an organization comprised of multi-disciplinary professionals we actively support discussion and knowledge-sharing between professionals who prescribe medications (e.g physicians) and those who do not (e.g. psychologists, public health professionals, dietitians, and physiotherapists). People living with obesity require multidisciplinary, multimodal treatment and long term support. Any backing we give to any form of obesity intervention is supported by published evidence and clinical practice guidelines, and is not influenced by suppliers or service providers of those interventions.

Obesity is a chronic relapsing disease. It is a major health concern that should be differentiated from the current cosmetic trend of using weight loss medication for appearance, which has become popular with the availability of drugs such as semaglutide. At EASO, one of our core objectives is supporting clinical professionals in Europe who work in the field of obesity management across prevention and treatment. As a scientific community, we are committed to providing a platform where research and evaluation of evidence-based tools related to the behavioral, psycho-emotional, physical and economic impacts of obesity management are studied, discussed, critiqued and evaluated. We acknowledge the importance of appropriate

physical activity, exercise training, sleep, healthy nutrition, behavioral support, and surgical and pharmacological treatments for improving health for people living with obesity.

While EASO welcomes recent scrutiny and pledges to be transparent in all partnerships, we also highlight the misrepresentation of obesity in public spaces perpetuated by stigmatizing imagery, language, and content. Such representations blame individuals, ignore biological, environmental and societal drivers of obesity, and question the integrity of committed health professionals, scientists, and advocates working to reduce the impact of a disease that has been neglected for too long.