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Study Probes Obesity Link to Fibromyalgia

Afflicting up to 5 percent of the U.S. population, mostly women, fibromyalgia is characterized by widespread pain and range of function problems. A new study in *The Journal of Pain* reports there is close association between obesity and disability in fibromyalgia patients.

The purpose of the study, conducted by University of Utah researchers, was to evaluate the relationship between fibromyalgia and obesity. They hypothesized that obesity significantly adds to the disease and disability burden of the condition. Two hundred fifteen fibromyalgia patients were evaluated in the study and given several physical tests to measure strength, flexibility, range of motion, and strength. Heart rates and sleep quality also were assessed.

The authors reported that consistent with previous studies, obesity is common among those with fibromyalgia. Half the study sample was obese and an additional thirty percent were overweight. Also consistent with previous findings, obese patients in this study showed increased pain sensitivity, which was more pronounced in lower body areas.

The obese patients also had impaired flexibility in the lower body and reduced strength.

The study concluded that obesity is a common comorbidity of fibromyalgia that may compromise clinical outcomes. The adverse impact of obesity is evidenced by hyperalgesia, disability, impaired quality of life and sleep problems. The authors also noted that recent evidence suggests weight loss improves fibromyalgia symptoms, perhaps resulting from patients adopting healthier lifestyles and taking more positive attitudes toward symptom management, and overall quality of life.

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