$1M Awarded to Study Link Between Cardiovascular Risk Reduction and Weight-Loss Drugs

Studies will identify predictors of cardiovascular risk reduction in people with obesity and heart disease taking GLP-1 medications.

April 29, 2025 By Laura Schmidt

The American Heart Association (AHA) is funding seven new studies to identify the link between cardiovascular risk and people with obesity and cardiovascular disease who take weight-loss medications, according to an AHA news release.

GLP-1/GIP receptor agonists, such as semaglutide (marketed as Ozempic for diabetes and Wegovy for obesity), were originally developed to treat type 2 diabetes, but they have since proved to have other benefits, such as improving cardiovascular outcomes.

The drugs stimulate insulin production, regulate appetite and slow the emptying of the stomach.

While research has shown that GLP-1/GIP agonists can improve cardiovascular outcomes, their effects vary across different populations, according to the AHA.

To uncover which people with obesity and cardiovascular disease are most likely to benefit from GLP-1/GIP medications, the AHA allocated $1 million to seven new scientific studies across the country.

The new research will add to a recently published AHA scientific statement highlighting the importance of identifying and treating people at increased risk for heart failure before symptoms develop.

AHA volunteer expert Jane Leopold, MD, an associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical

School and director of the Women's Interventional Cardiology Health Initiative at Brigham and Women's Hospital, selected the studies to be funded.

"While GLP-1 medications have shown great promise in reducing cardiovascular risk, we don't yet fully understand why the benefits vary so widely across different patient groups," Leopold said in the release. "This research will help us identify the biological, clinical and social factors that influence treatment response—enabling more precise, effective care for people with obesity and cardiovascular disease."

According to the release, the selected teams of scientists for the "Identifying Predictors of Cardiovascular Risk Reduction Among Individuals with Obesity and Cardiovascular Disease on GLP-1 Medications" projects are from: Trustees of Boston University in Boston; Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine in Cleveland; Duke University in Durham, North Carolina; University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas; Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, in New York City; University of Pittsburgh in Pittsburgh; and Regents of the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities in Minneapolis.

To read more, click #GLP-1 or #Cardiovascular. There, you'll find headlines such as "Weight-Loss Drugs May Prevent 10 Types of Cancer," "Social Factors Help Explain Worse Cardiovascular Health Among Adults in Rural Versus Urban Communities" and "Childhood Trauma Among Black Women Linked to Worse Heart Health."

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