



The intra-gastric balloon effective in promoting weight loss

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The insertion of the Orbera intra-gastric balloon is an effective temporary weight loss measure, delegates to the 81st Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons have been told.

The intra-gastric balloon is a soft, expandable, silicone balloon placed inside the stomach via a camera that enters through the mouth. Once inserted into the stomach, it is filled with sterile saline, occupying a large part of the stomach and thereby creating a feeling of fullness. By temporarily reducing hunger and food intake, it is hoped the balloon will induce behavioural change. It remains in the stomach for six months and is then removed.

Dr Candice Silverman, a Gold Coast based bariatric surgeon, told delegates of a program beginning in January 2009 which targeted patients with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 27 to 35kg/m². Weight and obesity related comorbidities were assessed prior to balloon insertion and at balloon removal. At 12 months post balloon insertion, clinic attendance or follow-up by means of telephone or internet survey was used to ascertain self-reported weight.

A total of 40 patients (mean age 48 years, 35 female and 5 male) with a mean pre-procedure BMI of 32kg/m² had the intra-gastric balloon inserted. Premature balloon removal was seen in 7 patients; for reasons of antral impaction (2 patients), severe reflux (1 patient), vomiting & hypokalaemia (1 patient) and generalised intolerance (4 patients).

Dr Silverman reported that the patients had a mean weight loss of 11.2 kg at balloon removal, with weight loss ranging from 5 to 25kg. Twelve months after balloon insertion, follow-up information was available for 26 patients. These patients had a pre-insertion weight on average of 86.5kg with an average weight of 73.9kg on balloon removal and an average weight regain to 79.7kg at 12 months follow-up. Four patients proceeded to bariatric surgery following weight regain.

“The program’s results indicate that the intra-gastric balloon is a temporary weight loss measure. It has been shown to be safe and effective in promoting weight loss,” Dr Silverman said.

Approximately 2,500 delegates from Australia, New Zealand and around the world are attending the ASC, which runs from 6 to 10 May and is being held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

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