

XXVIII IFSO World Congress

9-12 September 2025 | Santiago, Chile



Life after metabolic bariatric surgery:
what I have learned from my patients

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IFSO 2025 Santiago

Combined Therapies, The Dawn of a New Era

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I have nothing to disclose

Outline

- My experience – nurse and retreat facilitator
- The importance of the IH team
- What my patients have taught me and what I have learned
- Comprehensive follow-up aftercare and support



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My experience

- 26 years as a bariatric nurse, in Australia and New Zealand – seeing the challenges of patients living with obesity, even after surgery
- Hearing patients' stories of trauma, shame, family situation, vocation, experience of stigma and bias has taught me compassion and understanding
- Over 13 years since we started residential retreats
- 20+ years of providing patient support



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The importance of the integrated health team



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All need to be collaborative in their care, providing education, resources and support to ensure sustainable patient outcomes

Nurses perspective:

- Least scary and most trusted of the team
- Most able to confide in
- Understanding that their history, trauma, family situations, shame, and negative experiences impact QoL, their lack of self-love and self-worth, and challenged self efficacy





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What my patients have have taught me...

1. Most of our patients carry deep histories of shame, trauma, or difficult family dynamics
2. Eating is often more than hunger — it is self-soothing, comfort, or survival
3. Self-awareness, self-love and self-care is NOT intuitive – needs encouragement to be taught and experienced
4. Patients frequently need help to identify and then address factors that contributed to their excess weight
5. Ongoing follow-up and community/team-based support is essential



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So what have I learned?

1. Trauma, especially early childhood is common and manifests in self-sabotaging behaviours (*like comfort or overeating*)
2. Patients frequently experience emotional dysregulation and need tools and strategies to control/resolve this
3. Self-awareness, self-love and self-care *need* to be taught as soon as possible
4. Healing isn't just about surgery or nutrition or exercise; it's about learning new ways of relating to oneself
5. Long-term sustainable weight loss and improved health (mental and physical) requires comprehensive follow-up and support

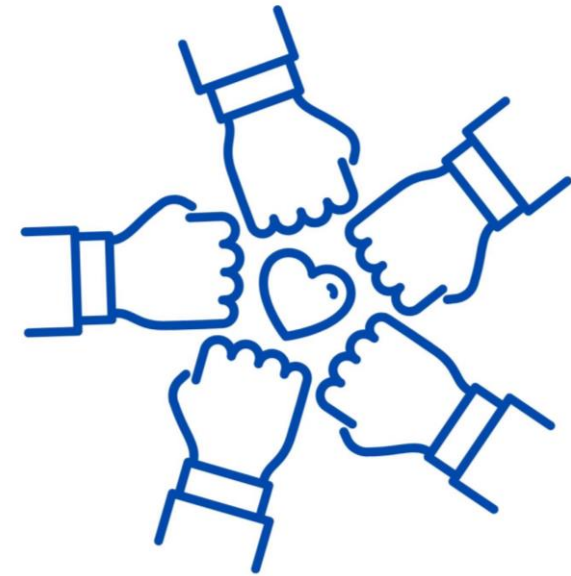
Comprehensive follow-up, aftercare and support is essential



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- Long-term ‘success’ is not just about the operation — it’s about the *follow-up*
- Patients need a **comprehensive multidisciplinary team**: medical, nursing, psychological, nutritional, exercise *and* peer support
- Compassion and understanding by the whole multidisciplinary team must be at the centre of care — reducing stigma, building trust, empowerment for the patient



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So what does this look like?

A community based model of care that includes:

- 2 years of comprehensive follow-up and aftercare from the MDT
- Surround Care or Fee for Service aftercare appointments – Face2Face or remote/virtual
- Residential retreat program
- Support groups – walk'n'talk
- Resources – webinars, seminars, masterclasses, newsletters, blogs, online community, recipe books, portion control plates, Apps, exercise cards, patient manual
- Access to vitamins and supplements
- Medical program with MDT and use of OMMs
- Annual blood reviews



What do we need to do?



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1. Treat our patients without shame, judgement or bias
2. Listen to them and hear their stories, their goals and expectations
3. Teach our patients more healthy ways to cope with the effects of trauma, adverse events, crises and triggers
4. Be passionate, compassionate, understanding and supportive
5. Focus not just on weight loss, but on health gain and living life



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Progression... 😊

The Future of Obesity Management: From Weight Loss to Health Gain

We invite you to join us for the XXIX IFSO World Congress, which will take place on 1-4 September in Toronto, Canada. The Meeting will enrich your knowledge and freshen your perspective on metabolic and bariatric care offering the latest updates in the field from a regional and global perspective. Access colleagues, improve your knowledge, and stay informed.



LOSE WEIGHT.
GAIN HEALTH.
LIVE LIFE.





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Conclusion

- With the right support and compassion, patients can thrive and break lifelong patterns
- It's not just about surgery, a community-based support and follow up program is imperative and paramount (to their long-term success)
- Wrap around care is essential and not negotiable. We must treat the biology/physiology *AND* the psychology

I am very grateful to our patients for being so open and honest and allowing us to share their journeys.