

## ‘What was your worst experience of weight stigma?’ Patient reports of bias by health care professionals

“Once when I was going to have surgery, I had to be taken to the basement of the hospital to be weighed on the freight scales. I’ve never forgotten the humiliation.”

“I became very frustrated when a doctor disregarded what I was telling him because he had already made up his mind that obesity was at the root of all my problems.”

“I think the worst was the family doctor who made a habit of shrugging off my health concerns. The last time I went to him with a problem, he said, ‘You just need to learn to push yourself away from the table.’ It later turned out that not only was I going thru menopause, but my thyroid was barely working.”

“I was referred to an orthopedic surgeon for assessment of knee pain. At the time I had just lost 30 lbs. and was riding my bike for a 30 min commute to work. He said ‘that’s not enough’ ... ‘you need to do more—at least an hour a day.’ It was very demoralizing. He was very disdainful and impatient.”

“I asked a gynecologist for help with low libido. His response was, ‘Lose weight so your husband is interested. That will solve your problem.’ I changed doctors after that! And I’ve told everyone I know to stay away from him.”

“Telling my doctor that I needed help to lose weight and he accused me of being a “closet eater” and he wasn’t going to put me on anything until I learned to eat better. When I protested he just laughed. This had a huge impact on me and I changed doctors the next day.”

“My gynecologist refused to help me with a problem I had because she said it was due to my weight. I have not gone back to a gynecologist since.”

“I went to see a doctor for intestinal pains. He didn’t even discuss my physical complaints, but instead kept discussing my weight. He told me how overweight I was multiple times and only discussed my weight, insinuating that it was the cause of my complaints. Then he told me I needed to exercise and actually said to ‘run up and down a flight of stairs as fast as I could until I felt like I was going to pass out.’ It turns out I had Intestinal Flu.”

“My previous doctor said that my weight problem was really an elbow problem caused by too much food on the end of my fork.”

“Nurses in the doctors’ waiting room stated aloud that if people in waiting room had any willpower that they wouldn’t be there. I was very upset, but at the time too shy to respond to it. I felt, at that time that she was right, and that I had no value.”

“My doctor said, ‘You are cheating or you would have lost weight.’”

