

Center for Obesity Prevention, Treatment, Education, and Research (COPTER)



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Obesity-related health conditions, such as diabetes mellitus type 2, dyslipidemia, high blood pressure, and cardiovascular disease, are leading causes of premature preventable death and cost billions of dollars each year worldwide. These metabolic diseases are very common in Lebanon, with almost two-thirds (67.3%) of the Lebanese population affected by excess weight (WHO 2014). Similarly, our previous studies showed that overweight and obesity were very prevalent among Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU) staff (64% in a convenient sample) and students (40% in a convenient sample). Therefore, NDU and the Faculty of Nursing and Health Sciences (FNHS) have been working diligently to provide the community with a multi-dimensional approach to combat obesity. With enthusiasm, we announce the opening of the Center for Obesity Prevention, Treatment, Education, and Research (COPTER). This obesity center on NDU ground offers a professional setting where NDU staff, faculty members, and students, as well as the community at large in the future, can benefit from trustworthy medical-nutrition therapy delivered by eligible faculty members who will assist them in reaching their goals and following up on their medical-nutritional health. Lately, to promote healthy lifestyle habits, COPTER and FNHS launched a symposium on obesity prevention

and treatment at NDU. The conference, which sought to address the risks of obesity and raise awareness on potential solutions, saw the participation of prominent figures in the field. Among the guests present during the conference was Professor Joseph Bakhsh, President of the Lebanese Order of Physicians. The event started off with a welcome note by Dr. Antoine Aoun, Director of COPTER and Dr. Jessy El Hayek, Dean of the FNHS. It also included two panels, each involving the interventions of Faculty members and industry specialists (Figure1). At COPTER, our mission is to empower individuals to lead healthier lives, transform communities through comprehensive obesity interventions, and contribute to groundbreaking research that advances our understanding of obesity and its multifaceted impacts. Our future team will consist of physicians, dietitians, physical trainers, and psychotherapists. As a start, COPTER's team consists of Dr. Antoine Aoun, Dr. Sibelle El Hayek, Ms. Maria Aoun, Ms. Estelle Salameh, and Ms. Stephanie Semaan (Figure2). As its name suggests, COPTER works on preventing, treating, educating, and researching obesity, whilst engaging our community (Table1):

- Prevention:
 - o Obesity-prevention programs aimed at various age

- groups, from children to adults, will be developed and implemented.
- o These programs will be community-based and school university-based and will focus on promoting healthy eating habits and physical activity.
 - Treatment:
 - o We will provide clinical services to individuals struggling with obesity. These include offering medical and behavioral interventions to help patients manage and reduce their weight.
 - o A multi-disciplinary approach will be used to manage obesity. This will involve experts from various fields, including medicine, nutrition, psychology, exercise science, and public health.
 - Education:
 - o Our team will educate and raise awareness about the causes, consequences, and prevention of obesity through community outreach, workshops, and educational resources.
 - o This will involve collaborations between healthcare professionals, educators, and policymakers to disseminate knowledge and promote a culture of health.
 - Research:
 - o We will conduct innovative research to deepen our understanding of the physiological, psychological, and societal factors influencing obesity.
 - o The research will contribute to the scientific community through publications, conferences, and collaborations to drive advancements in obesity prevention and treatment.
 - Community Engagement:
 - o Our team will establish a supportive and inclusive



community that fosters open dialogue, understanding, and empathy.

- o We will engage with community members through events, support groups, and online platforms to create a network of encouragement and shared knowledge.

Overall, COPTER has a multi-dimensional mission to fight obesity through research, clinical care, education, policy advocacy, and community engagement. Its ultimate goal is to reduce the prevalence of obesity, improve the health of individuals affected by obesity, and contribute to the broader understanding of this complex health issue. For more information about the center, please click on COPTER. Our commitment to addressing the complex challenges of obesity is at the heart of everything we do. As we embark on this journey together, we aim to use our collective efforts to foster a healthier, more informed, and supportive community.

Goals	Tasks/Interventions
Clinical activity	-Multidisciplinary Approach: Involving experts from various fields, including medicine, nutrition, psychology, exercise science, and public health
Education	-Awareness/conferences/workshops inside and outside NDU -Training opportunities
Research	-Data collection -Generating funds
Policy Advocacy	-Advocating for healthier food options and promoting physical activity in schools/ universities and communities
Collaboration	-Collaborate with other healthcare institutions, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and researchers
Evaluation and Continuous Improvement	-Self assessment -Patients satisfaction surveys

Table 1: COPTER roadmap