

Doctors back denial of treatment for smokers and the obese

To be used with the text from here:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/skills/news-lessons/monthly-topical-news-lessons/pdf-content/-doctors-back-denial-of-treatment-for-smokers-and-the-obese-intermediate/552114.article>

Discuss this statement in pairs:

“The National Health Service should be allowed to refuse non-emergency treatments to patients unless they lose weight or stop smoking.”

Try to predict these things about that question:

Which people support that statement?

What are the arguments in support of that point of view?

Which groups of people are against that statement?

What are the arguments against refusal of non-emergency treatments?

Which people have a more nuanced (= mixed) view of that question?

What are their balanced views between accepting or rejecting the statement?

Read the text and compare what it says with your predictions.

Before checking your answers to the task above with the answer key, complete the tasks below:

Are the following statements true, according to the text?

- Senior doctors and patient groups are opposed to the statement.
- The doctors surveyed thought the NHS was right to expect an obese patient or alcoholic to change their behaviour before they had liver transplant surgery.
- Dr Tim Ringrose of Doctors.net.uk thinks doctors should provide free healthcare from the cradle to the grave.
- The doctors surveyed thought smokers and obese people should be denied operations such as IVF, breast reconstructions and a new hip or knee.
- The doctors surveyed thought obese people should slim down by 10%, have a body mass index of under 35 or lose 5% of their body weight and keep their weight down for at least 6 months before they can get hip or knee surgery.
- The spokesman for the National Obesity Forum thinks that most fat people are not fat due to gluttony (= greediness).

Change the statements above so that they agree with the text.

Are these statements in the text true according to the other things written there?

- The Royal College of Physicians, which represents hospital doctors, said it was against the idea.
- Dr Mark Porter thinks treatment bans are unacceptable.

Why do you think the article uses that kind of language?

Put these amounts into order from the smallest at the bottom to the biggest at the top (it might help to add percentages for the top group)

A majority of doctors/ obese people

Some doctors/ obese people

Doctors/ Obese people

One doctor/ obese person

A small majority of doctors/ obese people

The vast majority of doctors/ obese people

Another doctor/ obese person

A few doctors/ obese people

A couple of doctors/ obese people

A tiny minority of doctors/ obese people

Many doctors/ obese people

Only one of the doctors/ obese people

A major change

Quite a big change

A huge change

A tiny change

A small change

No change

Very disturbing

Quite disturbing

Incredibly disturbing

Not very disturbing

Not disturbing

Slightly disturbing

Choose medical issues from the list below and try to agree on how big a thing they are and will be using language like that above.

- Obesity and related medical problems
- Deaths from smoking
- Alcohol abuse and related medical problems
- Testing of drugs on animals
- Cloning
- Test tube babies
- Genetic testing of babies in the womb
- Bribes to doctors
- Power of the pharmaceutical companies
- Rising costs of medical care
- Side effects of drugs
- Commercial pressures on drug companies
- The placebo effect
- People without health insurance

Prepare to speak about two of the topics above for homework, including how big a problem it is and will be.