

Fear of drugs to treat obesity: Real or overblown?

By ACSH Staff — July 2, 2013

[childhood obesity](#) unknown

[1] According to an [article](#) [2] in today's New York Times, an important new weapon in the arsenal against obesity seems to be vastly underused.

Obesity is one of the most important public health problems facing the U.S today. Yet, 16 years have passed since the enormously successful anorectic (appetite suppressant) drug Fen-Phen was withdrawn by Wyeth because of heart valve toxicity and rare cases of an often-fatal lung condition called primary pulmonary hypertension.

ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom says, To say that this put a chill in obesity research is quite an understatement. Subsequent to the Fen-Phen fiasco, it took more than a decade for an obesity drug to get approved in the US.

But, is this research void a result of a valid concern, or an overreaction? Dr. Bloom believes that it is mostly the latter. He says, The problems with Fen-Phen were subsequently found to be due solely to fenfluramine (Fen), one of the two ingredients in the pill. The other component, phentermine, continues to be used safely. None of the new obesity drugs contain fenfluramine, so there is no reason to expect that they would carry the same toxicity. Furthermore, as with any medicine, it is necessary to consider the benefits as well as the risks of the drug. Untreated obesity has its own morbidity and mortality, so failing to take a weight loss drug could be more dangerous than taking it.

Dr. Bloom's 2012 op-ed entitled Qsymia is Not Fen-Phen can be read [here](#) [3].

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Links

[1] <http://hsdispatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/childhood-obesity-008.jpg>

[2] http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/02/business/few-signs-of-a-taste-for-diet-pills.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

[3] <http://www.medicalprogresstoday.com/2012/07/qsymia-is-not-fen-phen.php>