

Alternative to gastric bands to beat obesity

By Henry Bodkin

HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

A NEW minimally invasive treatment for obesity which slows the flow of blood to the stomach promises to reduce the reliance on gastric band operations.

A trial of 20 patients in the US is being hailed as a possible new breakthrough after the participants sustained significant weight loss and suppressed hunger while enjoying an improved quality of life for at least a year.

The method, known as bariatric embolisation, involves introducing microscopic spheres into the arteries using a catheter that restrict the supply blood to the stomach.

The spheres do not restrict blood-flow enough to cause tissue-damage. However, the blockage is sufficient to suppress the production of hunger-stimulating hormones.

The trial by Johns Hopkins University found that on average, excess weight loss was 8.2 per cent after one month, 11.5 per cent at three months, 12.8 per cent at six months and 11.5 per cent a year after the procedure.

The patients, all of whom were severely obese, also showed an increase in early satiety - the feeling of being

full or satisfied. Moreover, their metabolism showed improvements and they displayed increased levels of high-density lipoprotein, the so-called "good" cholesterol.

The results, published in the journal *Radiology*, are significant because they offer a possible alternative to other far more invasive forms of bariatric surgery, such as smothering hunger by reducing the size of the stomach using a gastric band. More than 5,000 of these operations are currently performed in the UK each year.

"This is a great step forward for this procedure in establishing early feasibility, safety and early efficacy," said Dr Clifford Weiss, who led the study.

"It is fulfilling to all of us to see something that started as an idea develop through about a decade of research and then go all the way to an initial clinical trial. The reality is that obesity itself is an individualised disease that requires individualised treatments."

The research team cautioned that the method will need to be tried in larger cohorts of patients, including participants given a placebo.

Britain is in the midst of an obesity crisis, with more than 550 new cases of type 2 diabetes - a common consequence - diagnosed every day.

Daily Telegraph 3rd April 2019