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A MIXED-METHODS BLUEPRINT FOR OBESITY HEALTHCARE POLICY: FROM RESEARCH TO ACTION

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Objectives: To reform health systems and improve health outcomes for individuals living with obesity, there is a critical need to enhance and implement effective obesity healthcare policies. This research, driven by the IMI-SOPHIA (Innovative Medicines Initiative - Stratification of Obesity Phenotypes to Optimise Future Obesity Therapy) consortium, aimed to co-create impactful action points to improve obesity healthcare delivery. **Methods:** In this study, a mixed-method research approach with an exploratory sequential design was utilised. Online focus groups consisting of IMI SOPHIA researchers were conducted to develop action points addressing the needs and challenges of obesity in the healthcare system. To determine the relative importance of each action point, Maximum Difference Scaling surveys were administered for internal validation within the IMI SOPHIA consortium and for external validation to participants at the European Congress on Obesity 2024. Qualitative data from the focus groups were analysed using thematic analysis, while Hierarchical Bayes estimation was used to compute mean Rescaled Probability Scores (RPS; 0-100) of each action point from the survey responses. **Results:** Three focus groups (n ≈ 30) were conducted, and thematic analysis identified 10 action points grouped into four overarching themes: obesity screening and early diagnosis, obesity treatment and management, obesity perceptions, and the structure of our obesity healthcare system. The internal validation survey involved 37 participants from 12 countries, whereas the external validation survey included 203 participants from 34 countries. From both internal and external validation, the action point perceived as most impactful was "Access to obesity treatment should be guaranteed regardless of socio-economic background" (RPS internal = 23.3, CI 20.5 – 26.1; RPS external = 18.9, CI 17.9 – 20.0). **Conclusions:** The following 10 action points listed from most impactful to least impactful by the obesity community can be used by policymakers to identify which policy recommendations should be advocated for in the upcoming mandate.

