LUXEMBOURG INSTITUTE OF HEALTH

LECTURE | **Dr Ximena Ramos Salas** | **18.11.2026**

1A-B, rue Thomas Edison, L-1445 Strassen
Salle Katalin Karikó

12:15 - 13:15

How weight stigma shapes obesity care, from seeking support to long-term management

Weight stigma is pervasive across all ages and settings, and it is rooted largely in misconceptions about the causes of and solutions for obesity. Up to 71% of adolescents report weight-based bullying, two-thirds of adults in weight management programs report stigma from physicians, and 20-50% of adults across the weight spectrum have internalized weight bias, which is linked to depression, anxiety, disordered eating, healthcare avoidance and poorer health overall.

This presentation challenges the belief that body weight is simply a matter of personal responsibility. Weight is a biological outcome rather than a behaviour, shaped by genetics (40-70% of variation), hormones and brain signalling, environment, socioeconomic conditions, stress and life stage. The body defends against weight loss through persistent neuro-hormonal adaptations, so obesity requires long-term management rather than a one-time cure. Evidence also shows that shame does not motivate change: weight stigma triggers physiological and behavioural stress responses and is an independent determinant of health.

Current definitions frame obesity as a complex, progressive and relapsing chronic disease characterised by dysfunctional or excessive adiposity that impairs health, and not one that BMI alone can diagnose. The talk presents practical, evidence-based strategies for healthcare professionals, including the 5As of Obesity Management, the 4Ms framework, the Edmonton Obesity Staging System, person-first language and self-reflection on one's own attitudes. Reducing weight stigma is essential to fairness, dignity and effective, person-centred obesity care.



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