

## **Weight Loss Drug Mania**

**By Ann Gerhardt, MD**

**February 2024**

Kloe Kardashian, Elon Musk, Kyle Richards, Remi Bader, Amy Shumer and Charles Barkley all have something in common: They've all used GLP-1 receptor stimulating drugs to lose considerable weight.

GLP-1 (Glucagon-like peptide -1) is a hormone made by the pancreas and parts of the intestine, that assists with glucose regulation. It reduces unnecessary glucose production by the liver, increases pancreatic insulin secretion after consuming carbohydrates or sugar, and reduces appetite by directly affecting the brain. It also slows food movement through the stomach and intestine, reducing food intake by making one feel full longer.

Trulicity, exenatide (Byetta - the first), tirzepatide (Mounjaro – the cheapest), Victoza, and semaglutide (Ozempic) and are injected medications that mimic GLP-1 effects and are approved for diabetes treatment. They have reduced diabetics' disease from stroke and heart attack and all-cause deaths. Rybelsus (oral semaglutide) is the only one in (a very expensive) pill form. Two of these drugs, Wegovy and Saxenda, are the only drugs in this class that are approved by the Food and Drug Administration for weight loss. Insurance companies including Medicare are more likely to pay for one of these drugs if prescribed for diabetes.

These medications do not 'cure' obesity or diabetes. When stopped, appetite, high blood sugar and weight return. They also may have side effects, most commonly nausea, which reduces food intake even more. Some people suffer side effects of pancreatitis or injection-site and other allergic reactions, like headache, nasal congestion and sore throat.

Natural ways to stimulate intestinal cell GLP-1 release would be exercise and consuming foods and herbs such as berberine (from roots, leaves, stems and bark of Oregon grape and tree turmeric {Berberis aristate}), green, black and white teas, curcumin, cinnamon, whole grain wheat, soybean, resveratrol, and gardenia, shanzhizi in Chinese medicine. I hope there's a rush to use all those mothballed treadmills for an augmented

GLP-1 effect, rather than popping herbs, since exercise helps the body in ways other than just weight and some of those herbs can interact negatively with prescribed medications. There's nothing wrong with using turmeric and cinnamon in cooking and washing food down with tea.

In summary, GLP-1 mimicking medications are great for weight loss in morbidly obese individuals and diabetics with heart attack and stroke risk. It is important to start at a low dose and gradually increase as needed, to minimize side effect risk, and be ready to exercise and restrict food intake, to prevent rebound weight gain when the drug is stopped.