

The Infinite Game: Lessons for Obesity Management

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Medicine, today, grapples with newer challenges, newer concerns, and newer contests. One such condition is obesity. Emerging as a major pandemic, obesity impacts not only individuals, but societal health as well. Considered a chronic endocrine disease, with significant lifestyle determinants, it needs sustained endocrine and lifestyle modification for control. This requires a lifelong, or infinite attitude and approach towards weight maintenance.¹

In this editorial, we take academic inspiration from Simon Sinek’s book ‘The Infinite game’, and glean actionable insights from his treatise.² These aim to assist persons living with obesity, as well as their care givers and health care professionals, navigate the complexity and confusion that obesity often creates. We reflect upon two rubrics shared by Sinek, to prepare meaningful models that can help manage obesity.

For the person living with obesity, weight control and obesity management are infinite facets of life. It requires courage to accept a diagnosis of obesity, and clarity of cause to adhere to prescribed therapy.³ Success is achieved through collaboration, rather than confrontation, with the health care team. Awareness of competitive, or confounding factors, such as pressure to consume unhealthy food or unvalidated medications, helps keep such disruptors at bay. One must also take cognizance of the dynamic nature of obesity, and be capable of changing one’s management strategy as and when required. A Courageous attitude, focussing on a just Cause [health], in Collaboration with caregivers, while being mindful of Competitive [negative] concerns, long with the Capability to Change course as and when required, help achieve desired outcomes (Table 1).

The obesity care team requires similar depth of understanding. It takes courage to embark upon a career in chronic disease care. The fact that we are working towards a just cause, i.e., sustainable health for all provides satisfaction and succour. Results are enhanced if one is able to work as part of a collaborating team, ensuring that “competitive” malpractices are avoided. The obesity care

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Table-1: The Characteristics of an Infinite Player.

Courage
Cause, just
Collaboration
Competitive awareness
Changeability or flexibility

Table-2: The Practice of Infinite Play.

Purpose
Protection
Profit
Partnership

professional must be able to adapt and adjust, as required, to changes in the therapeutic landscape, and the environment or ecosystem as at large.⁴ A Purposeful approach to one’s work, while ensuring Protection and Profit [benefit] for all, in the spirit of Partnership, ensures sustainable success. (Table 2).

Sinek’s philosophy serves all stakeholders in obesity. Policy makers and planners need to challenge the status quo of barometabolic disease, and replace it with safe, community health-oriented programmes. Professionals, including physicians and paramedical staff, must remain abreast of advances in obesity science, and use them for a greater purpose, i.e., overall health.⁵ Persons living with obesity, and their care givers, should realize that this is an infinite game, where short cuts do not guarantee survival.

In obesity care, playing the game itself means winning. The last person standing takes it all.

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