

Press Release.

Experts call for earlier recognition of fatty liver disease in people living with obesity.

Brussels, 7 July 2026 - At the *Economics of Obesity and Metabolic Health Summit* - hosted by Economist Enterprise and held on June 10 in Brussels with support from multiple organizations, including Opella and its liver brand Essentiale - healthcare experts, policymakers and public health leaders called for stronger policy action to address the growing burden of obesity and its co-morbidities. Particular attention was given to steatotic (“fatty”) liver disease as an often-overlooked consequence, with Prof. Jeffrey Lazarus (ISGlobal) and Prof. Norbert Stefan (Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen) highlighting the urgent need to elevate its visibility in public health agendas. They emphasized that improving awareness and earlier identification of individuals at increased metabolic risk are critical to enabling timely intervention and reducing long-term health system impact.

Obesity is one of the fastest-growing public health challenges worldwide, with the global economic impact of obesity and metabolic disorders projected to exceed \$4 trillion annually by 2035¹. Fatty liver disease is closely linked to obesity and impaired metabolic health, affecting approximately 70% to 80% of people living with obesity². As obesity rates continue to increase, experts noted that the fatty liver is becoming more prevalent and is now recognized alongside cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes as a major obesity-related health concern.

Key insights from the discussion:

- **Prof. Norbert Stefan**, Professor of Clinical and Experimental Diabetology at the University of Tübingen, highlighted the close relationship between obesity and fatty liver disease. He explained that fatty liver can be an important marker of impaired metabolic health and help identify individuals who may be more likely to develop obesity-related complications.
- **Kwasi Boahene**, Director of Health Systems at PharmAccess, emphasized that prevention is most effective when people have access to routine health checks, screening and follow-up care that enable earlier detection of metabolic health risks.
- **Manuela Ripa**, Member of the European Parliament, highlighted the need for stronger prevention policies and healthier food environments, stressing that investing in prevention can improve health outcomes while reducing long-term healthcare costs.
- **Sohail Munshi**, Joint Chief Medical Officer at Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, emphasized the value of embedding prevention into routine healthcare interactions to help identify obesity-related risks earlier and support timely intervention.

A common theme throughout the discussion was the need to improve awareness of fatty liver disease and its connection to obesity and metabolic health.

Prof. Norbert Stefan. Professor of Clinical and Experimental Diabetology at the University of Tübingen.

“Not all people living with obesity face the same risk of developing obesity-related complications³. As healthcare systems face increasing pressure, it is becoming more important to identify those individuals at highest risk and intervene earlier. Fatty liver can be an important indicator of increased metabolic health risk, helping people and healthcare professionals recognize potential problems before more serious conditions develop.

¹ World Obesity Federation. *World Obesity Atlas 2023*. March 2023.

https://www.worldobesityday.org/assets/downloads/World_Obesity_Atlas_2023_Report.pdf

² Tilg H, Petta S, Stefan N, Targher G. Metabolic Dysfunction–Associated Steatotic Liver Disease in Adults: A Review. *JAMA*. 2026;335(2):163–174. doi:10.1001/jama.2025.19615

³ Stefan N. Causes, consequences, and treatment of metabolically unhealthy fat distribution. *Lancet Diabetes Endocrinol*. 2020 Jul;8(7):616–627. doi: 10.1016/S2213-8587(20)30110-8.

We have identified a fatty liver as the key characteristic that distinguishes people with healthy obesity from those with unhealthy obesity. These findings have also led to the recognition that, in addition to cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes, fatty liver disease is now also considered a condition for which the costs should be covered by the healthcare system.”

The discussion reinforced the importance of helping people better understand the links between obesity, metabolic health and fatty liver disease. Experts agreed that increasing awareness and recognising risk factors earlier could support more proactive health management and contribute to healthier populations in the years ahead.

About Opella.

Opella is the self-care challenger with the purest and third-largest portfolio in the Over-The-Counter (OTC) & Vitamins, Minerals & Supplements (VMS) market globally. Our mission is to bring health in people's hands by making self-care as simple as it should be. For half a billion consumers worldwide – and counting. At the core of this mission is our 100 loved brands, our 11,000-strong global team, our 13 best-in-class manufacturing sites and 4 specialized science and innovation development centers. Headquartered in France, Opella is the proud maker of many of the world's most loved brands, including Allegra, Buscopan, Doliprane, Dulcolax, Enterogermina, Essentiale and Mucosolvan. B Corp certified globally, we are active players in the journey towards healthier people and planet.

Find out more about our mission at www.opella.com.

Prof. Norbert Stefan.

N.S. has received research support and materials from Opella to conduct a study in people with fatty liver disease and to attend the *Economics of Obesity and Metabolic Health Summit*; fees for consultancy and scientific talks from Allergan, AstraZeneca, Boehringer Ingelheim, Gilead, Genkyotex, GSK, Intercept Pharma, Lilly, Merck Sharpe & Dohme, Novartis, Novo Nordisk, Opella and Pfizer; and has received research support from AstraZeneca, Boehringer Ingelheim, DSM Nutritional Products and Roche Diagnostics; and serves as coleader in the German Diabetes Association Study group MASLD.

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