Briefing Paper – Health Committee

**The Use of Ozempic for Weight Loss**

Obesity is a global public health challenge with serious health and economic implications. One emerging pharmaceutical intervention for weight loss is Ozempic. Ozempic, known generically as semaglutide, was approved in 2017 by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in adults with type 2 diabetes. It is a weekly injection that helps lower blood sugar by helping the pancreas make more insulin. It is not approved for weight loss, but some physicians prescribe it to be used for weight loss. In recent years, there has been growing interest in repurposing existing medications to combat obesity.

Background information:

Ozempic, a glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonist, has demonstrated promising results in clinical trials as a weight loss medication.

Ozempic works by mimicking the action of GLP-1, a hormone that regulates blood sugar and appetite. It reduces appetite, increases feelings of fullness, and regulates glucose metabolism.

In the STEP (Semaglutide Treatment Effect in People with Obesity) clinical trial program, participants treated with Ozempic experienced significant weight loss compared to those on a placebo. Clinical trials have shown that Ozempic can lead to significant weight loss when used in conjunction with a reduced-calorie diet and increased physical activity. Some patients have achieved up to 15% body weight reduction.

The active ingredient in Ozempic, known as semaglutide, is FDA-approved at higher doses for treating individuals living with obesity and other weight related medical problems under the name Wegovy. However, Due to a Wegovy shortage coupled with Ozempic’s weight loss effects going viral on social media, people without type 2 diabetes have begun using Ozempic off-label for weight loss. Billionaire Elon Musk has credited it for his dramatic weight loss, and celebrity sites allege that many more A-listers are using it to stay trim. This could have some dangerous side effects especially as the effects of ozempic have not been researched to a large extent.

Despite the risks, ozempic could be used as a tool to combat the global obesity epidemic.

Questions to consider:

* Do we know enough about ozempic?
* Should ozempic be widely accessible for everyone who wants to lose weight, just the severely obese or only for people with type 2 diabetes?
* Should it only be used in countries with a current obesity problem?
* Should there be equal access to ozempic to tackle health inequalities?
* Should it only be for doctors to prescribe?

Useful links:

* <https://www.forbes.com/health/body/ozempic-for-weight-loss/>
* <https://www.who.int/health-topics/obesity#tab=tab_1>
* <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/ozempic-tiktoks-favorite-weight-loss-drug-is-unproven>
* <https://health.ucdavis.edu/blog/cultivating-health/ozempic-for-weight-loss-does-it-work-and-what-do-experts-recommend/2023/07#:~:text=Ozempic%20is%20not%20approved%20for,it%2C%20establishing%20a%20new%20normal>
* <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/about_us/news/ozempic-and-weight-loss-facts-behind-headlines>