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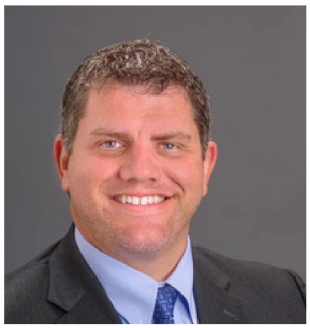
THE RESEARCH GRANT REPORT

by BENJAMIN CLAPP, MD, FACS, FASMBS; TAMMY KINDEL, MD, PhD, FACS, FASMBS; and SHAINA R. ECKHOUSE, MD, FACS, FASMBS

Dr. Clapp is an Associate Clinical Professor of Surgery at Texas Tech School of Medicine at El Paso in El Paso, Texas. Dr. Kindel is Associate Professor of Surgery at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Dr. Eckhouse is an Associate Professor of Surgery at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri.

Interview with Andrew Wheeler, MD



Andrew Wheeler, MD, was a recipient of the 2023 American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS) research grant, funded by the Treatment, Research and Education to end Obesity (TREO) Foundation for his study titled “Biometabolic Impact of Continuation of GLP-1 Agonists Following Bariatric Surgery: A Randomized Control Trial.

”The grant amount was for $25,000. In this article, we aim to highlight Dr. Wheeler’s clinical and research career and the clinical implications of his study. Additionally, we will explore the vital role that the TREO Foundation grant will have in helping him build an extramurally funded research career.

Can you please share your current clinical practice and research background as a surgeon–scientist focusing on the hormonal and metabolic effects of bariatric surgery in the treatment of obesity?

Dr. Wheeler: My academic clinical practice focuses on comprehensive weight management. I have a particular clinical interest in maximizing the effectiveness of metabolic surgery using combined medical and surgical therapy before and after surgery. We study metabolic changes and determinants after metabolic surgery, including changes in gut microbiome and circulating metabolite changes after surgery to better understand the mechanisms of the beneficial effects of metabolic surgery, not only on obesity, but also on associated comorbid illnesses.

You were awarded an ASMBS research grant in 2023, funded by the TREO Foundation. Could you further explain the aims of this grant?

Dr. Wheeler: Our goal is to determine, both clinically and physiologically, the benefits or potential downfalls of the continuation of glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) agonists as pharmacologic management after metabolic surgery. We want to determine if continuation of these medications can improve outcomes after metabolic surgery or potentially lead to more side effects. We are going to measure changes in the gut microbiome, as well as circulating metabolites after surgery, to understand if the addition of GLP-1 agonists to metabolic surgery results in more changes than surgery alone.

What were the results of the ASMBS research grant funded by TREO Foundation? This may be early, so you can answer what you think the results will be.

Dr. Wheeler: We hypothesize that fewer patients will regain weight and overall weight loss will be improved when continuing GLP-1 agonists after surgery, but that there will likely be a number of patients who have to stop the medication postoperatively due to side effects.

Please explain what makes your grant interesting to the membership of the ASMBS.

Dr. Wheeler: Data from this work should help provide direction for medical weight loss physicians and bariatric surgeons to better advise patients and make recommendations on using GLP-1 agonists after surgery.

How have the findings from the study funded by TREO Foundation through the ASMBS research grant affected the daily practice of bariatric surgery?

Dr. Wheeler: This is pending, but we believe this work could potentially inform and impact clinical decision-making.