WHY ARE POST-BARIATRIC PATIENTS IN SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT?
PATIENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ETIOLOGY AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Valentina Ivezaj¹, M.S., Karen K. Saules¹, Ph.D., Ashley Wiedemann¹, B.S., Daniel Wood¹, B.S., John A. Hopper², M.D., Joyce Foster-Hartsfield³, M.D, & Anne Eshelman⁴, Ph.D.
Eastern Michigan University¹, St. Joseph Mercy Hospital², Brighton Hospital³, Henry Ford Hospital⁴

Introduction
Recent evidence suggests that post-bariatric surgery patients are overrepresented in substance abuse treatment programs (Saules et al., in press). Little is known, however, about why this phenomenon is occurring. The goal of the present study was to gain a better understanding of the onset of substance abuse relative to the timing of bariatric surgery through the perceptions of post-bariatric patients struggling with this issue.

Method
Twenty patients in Brighton Hospital’s comprehensive substance abuse treatment program participated in the present study. Participants were asked to complete two phases, namely a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire packet. Qualitative interview data were used to evaluate participants’ perceptions of the etiology of their substance abuse problems and their recommendations for treatment providers working with bariatric patients.

Results
The sample consisted primarily of Caucasian (88.2%) women (77.8%) with a mean age (± SD) of 43.83 (± 10.50), mean BMI (± SD) of 31.85 (± 7.20), mean number of years since surgery (± SD) of 5.06 (± 2.58) years, and mean post-surgical weight loss (± SD) of 120.83 (± 56.25) pounds. Based on interview data, four themes emerged regarding substance abuse etiology and three themes emerged regarding future recommendations. Representative quotes of each theme are presented to the right. In addition, representative trajectories of substance abuse development relative to bariatric surgery are depicted.

Discussion
Implications include increased psychological treatment pre- and post-surgery, with a particular focus on navigating identity shifts, and increased education related to substance abuse risks post-bariatric surgery.