

# CASE EXAMPLE 1: ERIC

Please read the case example and consider the questions to the right.

*Eric is 47 and weighs 357 pounds. He arrives at his doctor's office, and after checking in at the front desk, he looks for a place to sit in the waiting room. He notices that all the chairs in the office are narrow and have armrests. His knees are hurting him and he can't continue to stand, so he awkwardly lowers himself into the nearest chair.*

*When the nurse calls his name, she leads him to a scale in the hallway and asks him to step on it. Eric hesitates - he doesn't feel comfortable being weighed where others might pass by. Not wanting to draw attention to himself, he reluctantly steps on the scale. To his humiliation, the scale only weighs up to 350 lbs. The nurse shakes her head and notes "350+ lbs" on his chart.*

*The nurse then leads him into a small exam room where he struggles to take a seat on the high, narrow exam table. She reaches for the blood pressure cuff, then realizing her mistake, says, "One moment, I have to get the big cuff." When she returns and takes his blood pressure, it is 160/90. She comments, "Your blood pressure is too high, you're going to have to do something about that."*

*By the time the doctor arrives to see him, Eric is feeling anxious and frustrated, wishing he were someplace else. He tells the doctor the reason for his visit - he is experiencing worsening knee pain. The doctor begins to discuss a plan for addressing his pain and his elevated blood pressure, recommending that he lose weight through diet and exercise. But Eric is too frustrated to listen and wants to leave the office as quickly as possible.*

- 1 What changes could be made to the office environment to improve Eric's experience?
- 2 How might Eric's experience at this medical appointment affect his future healthcare utilization?
- 3 What training would be helpful for the doctor and his staff to help them interact more sensitively with patients who have higher body weight?
- 4 How could the nurse and doctor engage in more supportive communication with Eric about his health?
- 5 How might Eric's doctor start a patient-centered conversation about his weight-related health?

# CASE EXAMPLE 2: MARIA

**Please read the case example and consider the questions to the right.**

*Maria is meeting with her doctor for a routine primary care visit. She is 29 years old and has a BMI of 38. She hasn't seen her doctor in three years. The last time Maria visited her doctor, he recommended that she lose weight. Maria has made some healthy changes in her life, but has been unable to maintain significant weight loss. She has stopped drinking sugary beverages, walks to work every day, and tries to make healthy food choices.*

*After reviewing Maria's chart, her doctor says:*

*Everything here looks okay except that your blood glucose is a little high. If you try to lose some weight, it probably won't develop into anything serious.*

*Maria replies:*

*I've tried to lose weight and it never works. I lost over 25 pounds, but I just keep regaining the weight back.*

*Her doctor responds:*

*Losing weight requires hard work, and it comes down to eating less and exercising more. Why don't you try skipping desserts and exercising more? Maybe join a gym?*

- 1** What assumptions is the doctor making about Maria based on her BMI?
- 2** What could Maria's doctor have said differently to her in this conversation?
- 3** How might Maria react to her doctor's words?
- 4** What would a supportive, patient-centered response look like?

## **Additional questions for self-reflection:**

- How do I feel when interacting with patients of different body sizes?
- How might my views about weight affect my body language and reactions to patients?
- How often do I consider my patient's perspective about weight and their prior experiences?