**THE OBESITY PARADOX IN CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE**

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The obesity paradox was initially described in patients with heart failure. Obesity is an independent risk factor for heart failure. Heart failure is associated with increased mortality risk regardless of body weight. However, in patients with heart failure of equivalent degrees of severity obese persons have lower mortality rates than lean individuals. An obesity paradox has also been described in patients with systemic hypertension, ST segment elevation myocardial infarction, percutaneous coronary revascularization, coronary artery bypass grafting and peripheral arterial disease. In each of these conditions mortality rates are lower in obese than in lean patients. Why obesity seemingly confers survival benefit for patients with these disorders is uncertain. Proposed explanations include selection bias and effects of co-morbidities, but neither fully accounts for the lower mortality rates in the obese cohorts. A so-called preservation effect has been suggested as a possible mechanism, but remains unproven. Thus, the obesity paradox in cardiovascular disease remains an enigma.