

Dr. Mick Crotty tells **Keeley Ryan** about the approach we should be taking to manage weight...

'WE'RE NOT PUTTING

people on diets'



ASK THE EXPERTS: Dr. Mick Crotty with his team

An Irish weight management doctor has told how we are “really brainwashed in the way that we think about weight” — and that there is “no ideal weight for every person”.

Dr. Mick Crotty is the clinical lead at Dublin's My Best Weight, a weight management clinic that puts the focus on finding healthy and sustainable ways to help people find their Best Weight.

The clinic has been recognised by the European Association for the Study of Obesity as a leading obesity management centre.

The first of its kind in Ireland, the team of internationally-accredited experts and doctors at My Best Weight use a “different approach to weight management”.

The doctor explained, “We focus on the long-term, sustainable treatments that are based on evidence.

“We're not putting people on diets, we're not looking at fats — there's no blame and shame, it's a non-judgmental and very safe environment. Our goal is to try and help people improve health. We're not in the business of trying to make everybody conform to society's opinion — we are trying to help people for whom their weight is having a negative impact on their health.

“If we do something safe, sustainable and long term, people can improve their health.

“As far as why I set it up, I'm a GP — that's my background — and I specialised in weight management. In all my training in college and postgraduate, I didn't feel there was good education in the area. I moved to Canada when I finished my training and spent five years there.

“And that's where I really discovered the

science and evidence of how we should be managing weight. It was after I came back to Ireland with my family that I set up this clinic — I don't feel like there's anything like it in Ireland, and this is the approach we should be taking to manage weight.”

Dr. Crotty added that one of the problems he sees is that “there's lots of bias and stigma and assumptions about weight made in society”, which aren't based on science and are “very discriminatory and very unfair”.

He continued, “How (My Best Weight is) different is that we really understand the biology behind why people struggle with weight; that it's not a matter of willpower, motivation or a lifestyle problem. This is a real medical issue, it's regulated by the brain and there's strong genetic links.

“We know the kinds of hormones that regulate hunger and fullness or the impact of our modern environment — all those things, they lead people to struggle with weight.

“I meet people very frequently who have lost weight, but that weight has come back multiple times. And they blame themselves. They think that they're doing something wrong — but really, that's exactly what the body was created to do.

“Because we understand the underlying biology and underlying causes, we address those with people. That's what makes us kind of different, (knowing) that this is a medical issue and it's not a diet or lifestyle issue for most people.

“We're really brainwashed in the way that we think about weight. We think that it's eat less, move more, diet and exercise. But really, when you look at the science, telling someone who has an issue with their weight to eat less and

move more — long term, that's like telling someone who has asthma to stop coughing and take a deep breath.

“It's a gross complication of a much more complicated system and doesn't take account of the underlying causes and biology.

“But again, we've got this stigma and bias in society that is telling people this and we have a whole industry that is promoting this idea.”

Dr. Crotty also opened up about the clinic's work, both with patients and trying to increase and raise awareness around “why weight isn't in our control as much as we would like to think”.

He added that it was important to remember “the scale is not the sole indicator of health” — and that My Best Weight puts the focus on other measurements of success.

Dr. Crotty continued, “Part of our clinic is seeing patients, assessing them and treating them — this is a medical issue that people live with but most people have never been treated for it or diagnosed with it.

“Another part of our work is educating healthcare professionals and trying to increase awareness of why this isn't someone's fault — why weight isn't in our control as much as we would like to think. And if we help people understand this isn't their fault, it removes some of the self-blame and self-stigma that people

carry (about weight).

“That's a hugely important thing. We don't blame ourselves for having asthma or psoriasis or other medical conditions, but weight is something that people blame themselves for — and that makes it even more challenging for people to seek treatment.

“We don't use weight targets. We don't use ideal weights. Every person is unique — we're unique in our biology, our genetics and our experiences. There is no ideal weight for every person.

“We operate on the basis of what we call Best Weight. And that means that all we can do is make the best health decisions we can, day-to-day — and ultimately, our weight will end up where our weight will end up. And that isn't in control as much as we would like to think.

“Now with treatment, there are three different evidence-based treatments — and they will help somebody find their best weight. Whether that's behaviour support, medication as a treatment or surgical treatment, all of those are evidence-based, science-based treatments.

“Diet and exercise is not a treatment for excess weight.

“The scale is not the sole indicator of health — and it's actually not a very good indicator of health. We focus on other kinds of measures of success, whether it's improving somebody's relationship with food, energy level, improved sleep, improved function and physical activity, reduction in blood pressure and blood sugar — all of those things are much better indicators of health than anything a number on the scales tells us.

“So, really, we need to kind of shift and move our focus — it's not all about what the scale tells us. The scale doesn't tell me anything about somebody other than their size. It doesn't necessarily tell me about their health, their personality, their achievements or their goals.” ■

For more information about Dr. Crotty and My Best Weight, visit mybestweight.ie.

“THE SCALE IS NOT THE SOLE INDICATOR OF HEALTH...”



FACTORS: There are multiple factors to consider when it comes to weight (pictures: EPCO Media)