THE ARISING

HEALTH INTELLIGENCE / ARISING HEALTH

LIVING HANDBOOK / SELECTED READINGS

Beyond the First Prescription

Metabolic health, continued treatment, and the connection to sleep apnea.



Alive. Awake. Aware.

John Griffin, MD / Arising Health

READING EDITION / OCTOBER 25, 2026

How to read this companion

Consolidates earlier source-checked copy with additional editorial framing. No new full-text appraisal, medication-label review or public-site update was performed in this extension.

Evidence is attached to the question it answers. Human clinical effects, observational associations, animal experiments, cellular measurements and computational proposals are kept distinct. This reading copy is not individual medical advice.

In this booklet

01 Keep the treatment pathway in view

02 Beyond the first prescription

03 Where weight and sleep apnea meet

04 What to bring into a follow-up conversation

Follow the evidence

Each chapter identifies the sources supporting its factual claims. Direct primary-source links and review limitations appear in the reference section. Study dates are retained even when older work provides context for a newer story.

01 / Keep the treatment pathway in view

Evidence for this chapter: 1, 2. Source details and direct links appear at the end.

The first prescription is the beginning of a clinical pathway, not a complete account of benefit. Access, tolerability, continued treatment, follow-up and the outcomes a person values all shape the experience that follows.

This companion retains two complete articles from the prepared October 25 reading edition. One describes an observational comparison of sustained and minimal prescription exposure in older adults. The other revisits the randomized SURMOUNT-OSA trials as clearly dated background evidence.

The designs answer different questions. More prescription dispensations can be associated with better metabolic outcomes without proving why people in the groups differed. A randomized trial can test an intervention more directly, but its results still apply to the studied medicine, population, comparator and time frame.

This is educational reading, not a prescribing guide. It does not establish that every GLP-1-related medicine produces the same sleep outcomes, or that an individual can stop airway-pressure treatment. The clinical conversation should keep benefit, harm, nutritional needs, function and the person’s circumstances together.

02 / Beyond the first prescription

Evidence for this chapter: 1. Source details and direct links appear at the end.

What a study of older adults can–and cannot–tell us about sustained GLP-1 use.

Starting a medication and continuing it are not the same experience. A large health-record study in Israel followed this distinction among older adults with obesity, asking whether people with more prescription dispensations had different metabolic outcomes from those with only one or two.

The findings are encouraging, but their meaning depends on the comparison. This was not a randomized trial of a GLP-1 medicine against placebo. Everyone included had started treatment.

What the researchers compared

Zaritsky and colleagues examined Clalit Health Services records for 13,387 adults aged 65 or older who had obesity and did not have diabetes at baseline. All had paired body-mass-index measurements; 69% were women. Minimal exposure meant one or two prescription dispensations. Sustained exposure meant three or more.

Three fills do not establish years of uninterrupted treatment, a particular dose, or whether every dispensed dose was taken. That definition is essential to reading the headline.

The observed differences

The primary outcome was movement to a lower BMI category. This occurred in 55% of the sustained-exposure group and 30% of the minimal-exposure group: a 25-percentage-point observed difference. The median relative BMI changes were −8% and −2%, respectively.

Among 7,392 people with paired HbA1c measurements, blood-sugar category improvement occurred in 34% versus 20%. Diagnosed diabetes was recorded in 2.5% of the sustained-exposure group and 5.3% of the minimal-exposure group, an observed difference of 2.8 percentage points. The abstract does not supply a follow-up duration, so that difference must not become an annual prevention estimate or a number needed to treat.

Why association is not a treatment effect

The statistical analysis adjusted for age, sex, socioeconomic status and other medical conditions. Even so, people who continue a medicine may differ from those who stop in ways that influence the outcome: access, tolerability, illness, health behavior and clinical follow-up.

The authors explicitly describe changes observed after treatment initiation, not a proven causal effect. Nor does this study establish lifespan extension or resolve the balance of benefits and harms for an individual.

The useful question

For a healthspan platform, this is a reason to study the whole treatment pathway rather than celebrate the prescription alone. Which patients can continue treatment? What changes in function as well as weight? What happens after discontinuation? Those are questions this study helps sharpen, not questions it fully answers.

The result deserves attention precisely because its limits remain visible. Real-world observations and randomized trials can inform one another without becoming interchangeable.

03 / Where weight and sleep apnea meet

Evidence for this chapter: 2. Source details and direct links appear at the end.

A 2024 randomized trial offers context for the newer GLP-1 headlines.

Sleep apnea creates a direct connection between metabolic health and the night. But a connection alone does not tell us whether a treatment changes the sleep disorder. The SURMOUNT-OSA trials tested a more precise question in adults with obesity and moderate-to-severe obstructive sleep apnea.

This is established 2024 evidence revisited for context–not a newly completed October 2026 trial. Results for tirzepatide should not automatically be transferred to every medicine discussed under the broader GLP-1 heading.

Two trials, a defined population

Researchers conducted two phase 3, double-blind randomized trials comparing tirzepatide with placebo for 52 weeks. One enrolled people not receiving positive-airway-pressure treatment at baseline. The other enrolled people who were receiving it.

The primary outcome was change in the apnea-hypopnea index, or AHI: the number of breathing interruptions or reductions per hour of sleep. AHI measures the sleep disorder; it is not a measure of lifespan or proof that a later cardiovascular event was prevented.

What changed

In the first trial, AHI fell by an average of 25.3 events per hour with tirzepatide and 5.3 with placebo. The estimated treatment difference was 20.0 fewer events per hour, with a 95% confidence interval of 14.2 to 25.8 fewer.

In the second trial, the estimated treatment difference was 23.8 fewer events per hour, with a 95% confidence interval of 17.9 to 29.6 fewer. The primary abstract also reports improvements in body weight, hypoxic burden, blood pressure and patient-reported sleep outcomes.

Gastrointestinal adverse events were the most frequently reported side effects and were mostly mild to moderate. Eli Lilly funded the trials. Benefits, tolerability and the population studied all belong in the interpretation.

What the finding does not settle

The trials do not show that all sleep apnea disappears with weight loss, that every GLP-1 medicine has the same effect, or that a person can independently stop prescribed airway-pressure treatment. Individual decisions require clinical assessment.

They also do not isolate every contribution of weight loss from other pathways. Conference reports and retrospective studies can raise

additional questions, but their findings should not be presented as though they carry the same evidentiary weight.

Follow the connection, keep the distinction

Weight, breathing, sleep and daily function belong in the same conversation. The purpose of linking them is not to make one treatment explain everything. It is to ask better questions–and to keep the evidence attached to the particular outcome it actually measured.

04 / What to bring into a follow-up conversation

Evidence for this chapter: 1, 2. Source details and direct links appear at the end.

The most useful questions are specific. What was the original treatment goal? Which changes have been measured, and over what interval? What side effects or practical barriers are affecting continued use? What remains uncertain for this particular person?

Weight can be one important outcome without being the only one. A reading or monitoring system could also make space for sleep symptoms, physical function, nutrition, treatment burden and the next review date. This is an editorial design proposal, not a validated clinical protocol derived from the studies.

The literature is most valuable when it improves the quality of the decision rather than supplying a universal answer. Neither a favorable cohort comparison nor a successful randomized trial removes the need to assess an individual’s suitability, competing risks and preferences.

The connection worth following is not a promise that one medicine explains every outcome. It is a careful account of what changed, for whom, and with what burden of treatment. That is the basis for a more useful conversation beyond the first prescription.

Sources & review scope

1. Sustained Versus Minimal GLP-1 Receptor Agonist Exposure and Metabolic Outcomes in Older Adults Without Diabetes
October 22, 2026
Retrospective observational cohort
PubMed · PMID 42919108
Retained from the earlier October 25 source-checked reading packet. No new full-text appraisal in this extension.

2. Tirzepatide for the Treatment of Obstructive Sleep Apnea and Obesity
October 3, 2024 journal issue
Two randomized phase 3 trials
PubMed · PMID 38912654
Retained from the earlier October 25 source-checked reading packet. No new full-text appraisal in this extension.

Illustrations are conceptual editorial art, not photographs of study results or anatomical diagrams. The Horizon and supporting celestial themes are reused from the approved Arising visual collection.

KEEP FOLLOWING THE IDEA

Part of a connected collection

Return to a subject, follow a related booklet, or explore the wider projects. These links organize reading; they do not imply that one scientific finding proves another.

This booklet online →

Booklet directory · all 48 →

Atlas · GLP-1 based drugs (semaglutide, tirzepatide) →

Arising Health website →

The Arising book →

The Long Game →

Listen & watch →

Related booklets

16 · Strength Is Something We Keep Making →

13 · Beyond the Nutrition Label →

19 · Midlife Deserves Its Own Conversation →

The online review collection is hosted in the shared Atlas. Its existing access settings apply. The public website remains a separate destination.