

Crain's Health Pulse

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Weill Cornell Takes on Obesity, Diabetes

Surgeons at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center will soon offer “metabolic surgery” to treat both diabetes and weight loss. Dr. Francesco Rubino will head a new center for gastrointestinal metabolic surgery.

Formerly a surgeon at Catholic University of Rome, Dr. Rubino is among a small group of surgeons experimenting with treating type 2 diabetes—the most common kind—with surgery to bypass the duodenum, the upper part of the intestinal tract.

In a clinical trial believed to be the first in the United States, he will combine that procedure with obesity surgery, operating on diabetic patients with a body mass index of at least 35. If it is successful he wants to do a second study on diabetics who are not overweight.

It could take 10 years of follow-up to discern any negative side effects. But, if the procedure works, it could become standard treatment for diabetes, an NewYork-Presbyterian spokesman says.

With an estimated 2 million diabetics in New York City, that could mean a lot of revenue for the hospital. But of course, the spokesman adds, “we wouldn’t want a surgical treatment if someday there’s a pill to cure diabetes.”

Currently, the disease is managed rather than cured.