

# The Illusive Magic of Wegovy: Fully Understood or Uncharted Waters?

## Priority Update:

### The Illusive Magic of Wegovy: Fully Understood or Uncharted Waters?

In the 1990s, there was widespread optimism that the digital revolution would democratize information and bolster democratic institutions. What went unnoticed, however, was that the digital age would also democratize [disinformation](#). While access to valuable and accurate information has become extraordinarily easy, digital platforms have also empowered fringe ideologies and equipped authoritarian regimes with the means to disseminate propaganda, undermining democracy on a global scale.

Yet, the problem of disinformation is not confined to the political realm; it has seeped into healthcare as well. Medical professionals are now fighting an uphill battle against a deluge of false health claims circulating online. This issue reached a critical point during the Covid-19 pandemic, when battling [vaccine hesitancy](#) became a front-and-center concern for health agencies worldwide.

Historically, the weight-loss industry has been a notorious arena for disinformation, characterized by deceptive marketing and fraudulent practices. Long before the digital age, late-night infomercials featured individuals—often mere actors—asserting the effectiveness of diet schemes with claims like “Lose weight without dieting” or “Shed 30 pounds in 30 days.” With the advent of the internet, the industry gained another powerful channel for deception. Regulatory bodies such as the FDA tirelessly examine an array of [misleading promises](#) tied to weight management products, from pills and powders to various elixirs. Similarly, the FTC keeps a record of these claims, frequently encountered in the form of pop-up ads or clickbait. Adding to the complexity, this sector has shown little hesitation in exploiting [sensitive personal health information](#) for financial gain.

In the largely [self-regulated](#) realm of natural remedies and supplements, the potential health risks posed by untested products remain difficult to ascertain. However, when it comes to prescription weight-loss medications, the dangers are well-documented and severe. Take the case of Fen-Phen, a cocktail of fenfluramine and phentermine. Once hailed as a groundbreaking solution to obesity in the early '90s, it was eventually pulled from the market due to [life-threatening side effects](#) such as fatal pulmonary hypertension and heart valve issues. This resulted in enormous legal fallout, with damage claims exceeding an astonishing [\\$13 billion](#). In a similar vein, other weight-loss medications like [Belviq](#) and [Meridia](#) have been taken off the market due to grave health risks, including cancer and cardiac complications.

The latest sensation in the world of weight-loss medications is [Semaglutide](#), commercially known as Ozempic, Wegovy, or Rybelsus. Produced by the Danish pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk, the drug has not only revolutionized the treatment of diabetes and obesity but also significantly [buoyed Denmark's economy](#), lifting its national budget into a surplus. However, the drug's meteoric rise has sparked a range of challenges.

Semaglutide, a peptide, belongs to the GLP-1 receptor agonists class of drugs, which function by stimulating insulin production and suppressing appetite. While its efficacy in lowering blood sugar and body weight is well-established, uncertainties about its long-term side effects and potential risks loom large. This concern is exacerbated by the drug's recent application for weight loss, a use that has been widely promoted by [celebrities](#) and thus has garnered a massive consumer base eager for the so-called “[vanity drug](#).”

The surging demand for Semaglutide in the U.S. has outpaced supply, leading some consumers to seek unapproved, and in some cases, [counterfeit versions](#). Meanwhile, most of the non-FDA approved drugs are [compounded products](#), with compounders arguing that their production is necessitated by shortages of the branded drugs. In response, Novo Nordisk has taken [legal action](#) against various medical compounding pharmacies and providers, accusing them of patent infringement.

While issues of demand and supply are immediate concerns, they barely scratch the surface of a deeper, more



complicated issue: the long-term safety of Semaglutide. Preliminary research and anecdotal evidence have already flagged a range of potential adverse effects. These range from [gastrointestinal disturbances](#) to a concerning aversion to food that could pose risks of [malnutrition](#).

An even more pressing concern is the absence of comprehensive data regarding the [long-term effects](#) of using Semaglutide for weight loss. Specifically, little is known about its impact when used beyond one year for dietary purposes. Adding another layer of complexity, clinicians have observed that patients often regain significant weight after discontinuing the medication. Reports indicate that a year post-therapy, patients have regained approximately [two-thirds of the weight](#) they had initially lost.

Beyond medical considerations, the drug's societal and economic impact warrant serious attention. On one hand, Semaglutide's appetite-suppressing capabilities could significantly influence consumer behavior, affecting various sectors of the [food industry](#) from production to retail and even dining establishments. On the other hand, the drug holds immense therapeutic potential. By mitigating obesity-related illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke—conditions that impact over [93 million Americans](#), Semaglutide could substantially ease the financial strain these diseases place on healthcare systems, both in the United States and globally.

As it stands with Semaglutide, there's much we know, but gaps remain. The drug holds great promise, but we should not be blind to potential perils. While Semaglutide offers significant therapeutic benefits for diabetes and obesity, the drug also raises a host of medical and socio-economic concerns that warrant further investigation. Greater research is needed to assess its long-term safety and efficacy. In the near term, supply chain growth is badly needed to ensure the drug's availability, affordability, and quality. Semaglutide isn't a magic solution, and while it's not seen as dangerous like Fen-Phen or OxyContin, the future is still uncertain. Any powerful new medicine requires careful attention, so time will tell.

Authored By:

[Harry Nelson](#), Managing Partner, Nelson Hardiman

[Yehuda Hausman](#), Law Clerk, Nelson Hardiman

## **Nelson Hardiman LLP**

Healthcare Law for Tomorrow

Nelson Hardiman regularly advises clients on new healthcare law and compliance. We offer legal services to businesses at every point in the commercial stream of medicine, healthcare, and the life sciences. For more information, please contact [www.nelsonhardiman.com](http://www.nelsonhardiman.com)