Who should take an obesity drug? A new genetic test class to identify patients most likely to benefit

As everyone in health care is trying to figure out which patients should get pricey new weight-loss drugs, a biotech company spun out of the Mayo Clinic is betting the genetics-based approach it’s pioneering may hold the answer.

Why it matters: Despite soaring demand for the class of drugs known as GLP-1s, certain patients may do better with older and cheaper treatments for obesity.

Homing in on obesity’s genetic underpinnings through precision medicine may represent a more cost-effective way of tackling weight loss, Phenomix Sciences says.

What they’re saying: “We’re not going to solve the obesity crisis by treating 100 million people” with drugs like Wegovy, which has a list price of $16,000 a year, Phenomix CEO Mark Bagnall told Axios.

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The big picture: Other researchers are searching for biomarkers to better target GLP-1 use.

For example, a study of Type 2 diabetics in The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology last year found Hispanic and American Indian or Alaska Native populations are more likely to have a genetic variant indicating they may respond particularly well to GLP-1s agonists compared with European white populations.

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