

Childhood obesity in Asia with particular reference to Malaysia

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Abstract

Rapid and sustained economic growth, modernization, urbanization plus the globalization of food markets, and significantly less physical activity in all sectors have fuelled the obesity epidemic in developing economies. Collectively these factors have underpinned the worldwide nutrition transition and associated societal changes. One of the more problematic consequences is that in Asian countries undergoing nutrition transition, over-nutrition often co-exists with under-nutrition. Under-nutrition early in life and subsequent obesity in adulthood predisposes such individuals to high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes at an earlier age and in a more severe form than those who were never undernourished. Current obesity levels range from below 5% in China and Japan to much higher rates in other countries however despite relatively low prevalence rates across countries like China, the rates are almost 20% in some cities. Estimates suggest that in Thailand the prevalence of obesity in 5-12 year-old children rose from 12.2-15.6% in two years. In the Pacific region, childhood obesity had already more than doubled to 5% in 2006 and is expected to rise to 7% - a threefold increase over previous studies. In Asia the average is also forecast to rise threefold from 1.5% to 5.3%. Complications due to inconsistent measurement approaches, the appropriateness of criteria for cut-offs, the relationship of overweight and obesity with co-morbidities coupled with the lack of systematic monitoring are some of the major concern in the formulation and effective implementation of intervention programs in developing countries.

Biography

Ismail Noor obtained his PhD in 1983 from the University of London. His major research interest includes energy requirements, obesity and sports nutrition. He was the pioneer member of the Nutrition Society of Malaysia and the Malaysian Association for the study of Obesity (MASO) for which he has been the President since 1995. He has made invaluable contribution to IUNS's and IASO's association network in Asia. He is responsible for organizing the International Congress on Obesity (ICO 2014) to be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and is currently the Secretary of IASO (2010-2014). Professor Ismail is the Fellow, International Union of Nutritional Sciences (2005).