

## Obesity – Time To Get Serious

National Obesity Forum 2009 Annual National Conference  
Royal College of Physicians  
Monday / Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> October 2009

**Obesity and its co-morbidities, role of testosterone, cancer, psychology of obesity and childhood obesity were just some of the topics covered in the packed NOF 2009 Annual National Conference. Read on to find out more....**

### Introduction

The two day meeting was another sell out. Over 350 delegates attended, from GPs, bariatric nurses and surgeons to commissioners. Delegates were given the opportunity to witness a much needed debate between food representatives from outlet chains. The discussion, part of a food labelling strategy campaign, highlighted the ways in which the food industry is helping to support the public in making healthier choices, marking an important step forward in reducing obesity by approaching the problem from every angle.

The intensive programme covered many important topics presented by a number of high profile keynote speakers. Research into the link between obstructive sleep apnoea and road accidents was outlined. Innovative approaches, financial incentive schemes and exergaming were also presented.

### Day One

*The chair, Professor David Haslam welcomed everybody to the conference. The vice chair, Jane Deville-Almond challenged the audience to assess their own services and to use the conference to spur small changes to improve them.*

Professor Stephen Gough, Professor of medicine and honorary physician, University Birmingham and University of Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, gave the Novo Nordisk sponsored talk on **Obesity and Diabetes**. Some of the main treatments used in the management of type 2 diabetes are associated with weight gain. This can be a barrier not only to intensification of therapy but also a reduction of diabetes-related complications including heart disease. A new class of therapies based on the incretin response have proven beneficial for better blood glucose control in people with type 2 diabetes. The 'incretin effect' refers to a mechanism mediated by specific small bowel hormones released when food is consumed. The hormones such as GLP-1, act on the pancreas to produce a favourable insulin response to the glucose load. In addition their use has also been associated with clinically significant reductions in body weight.

Professor T. Hugh Jones, consultant physician in general internal medicine, diabetes and endocrinology, Barnsley District General Hospital, Barnsley; honorary senior clinical lecturer, Hormone and Vascular Biology Research Group, Academic Unit of Endocrinology, Division of Genomic Medicine, University of Sheffield Medical School, discussed **the role of testosterone in obesity**. Testosterone replacement therapy in men with metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes has been shown to; improve waist circumference and

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body composition; reduce fat; increase lean mass; have no overall effect on BMI. Larger studies need be undertaken to determine the longer term benefit.

Dr. Bertrand de Silva, Medical Director of American Sleep Medicine, California and a world expert in sleep disorders gave an entertaining talk on **Obesity and Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA)**. He outlined why research has shown that OSA, a condition characterised by disruptive breathing through the night, has been identified as a fatal disease. This condition is now recognised as another co-morbidity of obesity along with type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. Up to 25% of the population may suffer from OSA (even more in the obese population). Only 1 in 7 of these are currently diagnosed as having the condition. The majority of sufferers are unaware they have this condition which can lead to daytime sleepiness, and double the risk of road accidents.

Sarah Woolnough, Cancer Research UK brought everyone up to date on the overwhelming evidence that being overweight or obese increases the risk of breast cancer in post menopausal women, as well as other types of cancer such as bowel, womb, oesophagus, gall bladder and kidney.

Dr Lucy Browning, a postdoctoral research scientist, talked about the new Ashwell Shape Chart. This concentrates on the waist to height ratio as a better predictor of health risks than either waist circumference alone or traditional markers of risk such as Body Mass Index or total body fat. She summarised the finding of a systematic review of studies that have measured weight to height ratio, BMI and waist circumference.

*The first afternoon session, the **Psychology of Obesity** was chaired by the NOF vice chair Jane Deville- Almond.*

Professor Andrew Hill, Professor of Medical Psychology, Head of the Academic Unit of Psychiatry & Behavioural Sciences, Leeds University School of Medicine started the session off with a talk on **Obesity and Depression**. He demonstrated how obese individuals are not only medically compromised but are socially and psychologically disadvantaged. He explained that obese women are 17-31% more likely to be currently depressed with risk of depression increasing with the level of obesity. In men, only morbidly obese or underweight are at an increased risk of depression. Prospective studies have shown that depression in teenage girls more than doubles their risk of obesity later on.

Professor Robert Pickard spoke at the symposium on the **Role of the Hypothalamus in Eating**, explaining the complexities of appetite and patterns in eating behaviour.

Colin Wilson gave an overview of **Talking Therapies**. He briefly reviewed Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), followed by a more in depth focus on

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Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) and Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT). He identified some of the non medical causes of obesity asserting that 90% of overeating can be attributed to underlying emotional issues. If not resolved these will ultimately lead to an individual being unable to engage in and persist with weight loss strategies.

*The session in **Managing Childhood Obesity** was chaired by Dr Matt Capehorn.*

Tam Fry, Chairman of the Child Growth Foundation and NOF Trustee gave a stirring talk on **Weighing and Measuring**. He argued that the current government guidelines do not go far enough. In order to stem the tide of obesity, children need to be measured more frequently and from an earlier age. He advocated weighing and measuring prospective parents to determine which babies will be born at risk of being overweight.

Kath Sharman was unable to deliver the latest update about SHINE as she had been called to take tea with Gordon Brown in recognition of winning a Pride of Britain award in the Yorkshire region. Mandy Stockley stood in, updating us on the SHINE project, their bus and outreach project.

Paul Sacher, Founder and chief Research & Development officer of MEND and NOF trustee showed a film of the latest MEND project for physical activity, "Move It". This is a school based activity programme for children at key stage 2.

Professor Paul Gately, Professor of Exercise and Obesity at Leeds Metropolitan University delivered the latest report on the residential Carnegie International weight management Camps and their community based counterpart - Carnegie Clubs, with examples of where these have been implemented and successful.

Rounding off the afternoon with an energetic presentation on Exergaming was Johnny Minkley, BBC Radio1's video gaming expert, who writes for Eurogamer magazine. He provided a practical demonstration followed by a summary of the virtual fitness products on offer and a preview of the latest generation of gaming equipment designed to burn up calories whilst having fun.

### Day two

*Session four, **Tackling Obesity**, was chaired by one of the NOF patrons, Anne Diamond. The intention of the day was to inspire delegates to think about ways to manage the obesity problem.*

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Sir Steve Redgrave, Olympic gold medallist gave an insight in to the highs and lows of his incredible career, how it has helped him found a charity to get children moving through rowing and the positive role that regular exercise can have in weight management.

The symposium on **Over The Counter Options** focused on the new formulation of the drug Orlistat called “Alli”, which marked the beginning of safe and evidence based weight loss drugs now being available without prescription.

Professor Iain Broom, Faculty of Health and Social Care, Robert Gordon University; Clinical Professor in Metabolic Medicine, University of Aberdeen gave a talk entitled **Very Low Calorie Diets: can they be effective?** He reviewed the evidence that suggested use of VLCD's can be safe and effective in the right patients.

Session five, **Strategies for Managing Obesity**, started with a talk about **Financial Incentive Programmes**. Winton Rossiter founder of Weight Wins, the service commissioned in Kent, (Kent PCT was the first PCT to commission such a service) presented an outline of the concept and his plans for developing the service.

Gill Fine from the Food Standards Agency summarised the work that has been done by working in partnership with over 20 Companies to introduce **Calorie Information on Menus**. This led into a panel discussion chaired by Anne Diamond with representatives from the Food Industry. Chris Wells, Product Excellence Director of Pizza Hut, Anita Kinsey, Technical Manager of Pret a Manger, George Gordon, Communications Director (UK& Ireland) of Unilever and Juliette Kellow, Nutrition Consultant for Subway answered written questions submitted from delegates.

Carol Weir, Healthy Towns Director, Sheffield was instrumental in commissioning obesity services for NHS Rotherham. She unveiled the NOF Obesity strategy, which is based on the service in Rotherham which won the 2009 NHS Health and Social Care Award for Excellence in Commissioning.

To coincide with the launch of the English Bariatric Group, part of the Expert Group on Severe Obesity in England, Alberic Fiennes, Consultant Bariatric Surgeon, Secretary of the British Obesity and Metabolic Surgery Society, delivered a review of the cost-effectiveness of bariatric surgery, as well as a look at the different techniques currently offered at specialist bariatric centres.

*The final session of the conference, **NOF news update, awards and the conference debate**, was chaired by our newly appointed NOF Patron, Dr. Hilary Jones, Health and Medical Advisor of GMTV.*

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Matt Capehorn, NOF Board member and this year's conference director delivered an update of the latest news from the NOF regional network and the inaugural one day Diploma in obesity. Wendy Nulty, NHS Rotherham, who achieved the highest score in the Diploma, was presented with an engraved glass trophy by Clare Robertson, Product Manager of BMI Healthcare, main sponsors of the first Diploma.

Jane Deville-Almond, NOF vice chair, gave a brief update on this year's National Obesity Week (NOW!) campaign, which is taking place from 2<sup>nd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> November 2009. It is designed to raise awareness of weight and BMI. More details can be found on the NOF website.

The Best Practise Award 2009 was presented to Christina Goldie, Diabetic Specialist, Grampian for a pilot study on cardiovascular risk reduction by obesity management using a holistic approach.

There were presentations and updates from the 2007 winner Juliet Miller on her Dial-a-Dietitian service and from 2008 winner Nicola Guess for her qualitative study on attitudes to physical activity amongst overweight patients.

The Weight Watchers research award was not awarded this year. Paul Sacher explained that none of the entries had reached the standard required. He called for next years submissions to recognise that projects need to be realistic in scope and the excellent mentoring on offer with this award. He also announced that next years award will be a rollover worth £16,000. This is a very attractive option for projects struggling for a lack of a research assistant.

**The NOF debate Diet Wars!!** Professor Iain Broom proposed the motion, "this house believes that low carbohydrate diets should be promoted in preference to low fat diets". This was opposed by Sue Baic, nominated to speak by the Primary Care Cardiovascular Society. After a number of questions and comments, a subsequent show of hands from the delegates narrowly rejected the motion. The discussion did not dispute the evidence supporting low carbohydrate diets. However, the majority of delegates found insufficient need to promote it in preference to low fat diets.

Professor David Haslam gave some closing remarks thanking all the delegates for their continuing support. Next Year, the tenth anniversary conference will take place at the Royal College of Physicians on Oct 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 2010.