

8. RESEARCH NEEDS

The research needs in relation to the prevention of overweight and obesity were discussed in the context of the local situation. Besides that, the Committee also adapted some relevant research strategies from WHO (1998) and the Surgeon General's Report (US DHHS 2001).

8.1 Setting 1: Individuals, Families and Communities

- a. Conduct research to develop cost-effective community-directed strategies to prevent the onset of overweight and obesity.
- b. Determine the contributing factors such as environmental, behavioural, social and ecological factors leading to obesity and how such forces vary by ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status.
- c. Assess the economic burden of overweight and obesity in the population.
- d. Develop and evaluate preventive interventions that target infants, children and adolescents especially those who are at high risk of becoming obese.
- e. Coordinate research activities to refine risk assessment of overweight and obesity.
- f. Conduct behavioural research to identify culturally appropriate techniques to motivate people to increase and maintain physical activity and make healthier food choices.
- g. Conduct research on the influence of marketing practices in food industry and food outlets.
- h. Study the cost-effectiveness of community-directed strategies designed to prevent the onset of overweight and obesity.
- i. Assess community insights in relation to their understanding, perceptions, and expectations on weight maintenance.

8.2 Setting 2: Schools

- a. Assess the effectiveness of existing nutrition and physical activity curriculum and co-curricular programs in schools.
- b. Investigate the effect of dietary practices and physical activity on schoolchildren's physical, mental and social health.
- c. Develop and evaluate school-based behavioural intervention programmes for the prevention of overweight in children.
- d. Develop, implement and assess effectiveness of appropriate obesity intervention programmes in schools.

8.3 Setting 3: Health Care

- a. Develop and evaluate the cost-effectiveness of obesity prevention and weight management programmes.
- b. Promote research on effective means of maintenance of weight loss.
- c. Promote research on breastfeeding and the prevention of obesity.

8.4 Setting 4: Media and Communications

- a. Develop media campaigns to prevent obesity and evaluate its impact.
- b. Conduct consumer research to determine whether media messages are positive, realistic, relevant, consistent, and achievable.
- c. Study the effects of popular media images of ideal body types and their potential health impact, particularly on young women.

8.5 Setting 5: Workplaces

- a. Evaluate best practices in workplace for obesity prevention and treatment efforts, and disseminate results widely.
- b. Evaluate the cost effectiveness of obesity prevention and treatment efforts at workplaces.
- c. Conduct controlled studies on the impact of overweight and obesity management programmes on worker productivity and absenteeism.
- d. Explore and evaluate the feasibility of providing incentives to employees that support healthy eating habits and active lifestyle.

REFERENCES

- WHO. (1998). *Obesity: Preventing and managing the global epidemic*. Report of a WHO Consultation on Obesity. Geneva: World Health Organisation.
- US DHHS. 2001. The Surgeon General's call to action to prevent and decrease overweight and obesity. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon General.