Launch of Prevention of Type 2 Diabetes in Asia

Date: 30 October 2011

Venue: Grand Hyatt, Singapore

More than 60 participants from the National University of Singapore (NUS), Duke-NUS, the National University Health System (NUHS), Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) Institutes, the Ministry of Health (MOH), government-restructured hospitals and Abbott gathered at the Grand Hyatt, Singapore for the inaugural symposium on the prevention of Type 2 diabetes in Asia.

Jointly organised by the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, NUS and the Department of Nutrition, Harvard School of Public Health, the event saw the exchange of the latest knowledge and innovative approaches to diabetes prevention featuring esteemed overseas and local experts who shared their successful experiences and explored novel strategies in diabetes prevention.
Dr Chia is the Dean and Professor in the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, National University of Singapore and also the Director, Centre for Molecular Epidemiology. He is also an Adjunct Professor of Epidemiology at the Karolinska Institute, Sweden. He received his medical degree in 1981, Masters of Science in Occupational Medicine in 1985 and Doctor of Medicine in 1995.

He is a medical epidemiologist and has published over 150 papers in journals, authored chapters and edited books in chronic disease epidemiology, molecular epidemiology and occupational health. His current research focus is gene-environment interactions in chronic diseases (cancer, cardiovascular disease, myopia, and diabetes mellitus), record linkages and disease registries.

Opening Speech Presentation Slide
Closing Speech Presentation Slide
Opening Speech Video
Closing Speech Video
Rob M. van Dam
Associate Professor, Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, NUS

Rob M. van Dam is an Associate Professor in the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health and the Department of Medicine, Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore. His research is primarily focused on the dietary determinants of obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases. The ultimate goal is to identify opportunities for the prevention of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases particularly in the Asian context where the prevalence of these conditions is increasing rapidly. This research is mostly based on large-scale cohort studies (particularly the Singapore Chinese Health Study and the Nurses’ Health Study) integrating data on reported diet, dietary biomarkers, biomarkers of intermediate pathways, and genetic variation. In addition, he conducts dietary intervention studies, meta-analyses, and studies of the cultural and physical environment as determinants of dietary behaviours. He has published more than 100 peer-reviewed articles on these topics. He was trained at Wageningen University (M.Sc. Nutrition Science, 1998) and the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (Ph.D. Epidemiology, 2003) in the Netherlands. Before he joined NUS he was an Assistant Professor at the Harvard School of Public Health and the Harvard Medical School.

Abstract: Diabetes prevention in Singapore Results from the 2010 National Health Survey indicate that 11.3% of adult Singaporeans has diabetes. Singapore has a history of successful public health policies resulting for example in a marked reduction in the prevalence of cigarette smoking. Despite various programs to promote healthy eating and physical activity, however, the prevalence of obesity in adults was 10.8 in 2010, which is double the prevalence in 1992. This trend mirrors obesity trends in many other countries, but is alarming as Asians are known to be at higher risk of type 2 diabetes at the same level of body fatness. A multi-sectorial approach that considers socio-cultural factors, changes the built, food, and media environment, and is based on widespread and long-term implementation of rigorously evaluated programs will be need to prevent further increases in prevalence of obesity and type 2 diabetes.
Eric A. Finkelstein
Deputy Director for Health Services & Systems Research
Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School

Eric A. Finkelstein is an Associate Research Professor in the Duke Global Health Institute at Duke University. He is also Deputy Director and Associate Professor in the Health Services Research Program at Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School in Singapore. Prior to his appointment at Duke, Finkelstein was a Senior Research Economist for the Public Health Economics Program at RTI (Research Triangle Institute.) At RTI, he focused his studies on “the economic causes and consequences of health behaviors with a primary emphasis on behaviors related to obesity.”

Before beginning his career at RTI, Finkelstein was a research scientist and a fellow of the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research at the University of Washington Department of Family Medicine. He earned his MHA, his Ph.D., and his MA in economics from the University of Washington. Dr. Finkelstein’s expertise is in health economics, obesity, and cost-effectiveness analysis. He has been the leader of several projects for the research benefit of public and private sector agencies including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Some of these studies concerned the “causes and consequences of obesity,” which involved the evaluation of various obesity prevention programs.

His work has been published in numerous academic journals, including the American Journal of Health Behavior, the American Journal of Public Health, the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, the American Journal of Health Promotion, and the American Journal of Preventive Medicine. One of his papers, “National Medial Expenditures Attributable to Overweight and Obesity,” received media attention across the nation after being published in Health Affairs. He was featured on a front-page story for USA Today, and was discussed in the Economist, The Washington Post, and Time magazine. The same paper is cited regularly in relation to the subject of obesity prevention. Dr. Finkelstein serves in other professional positions outside of his teaching and research responsibilities. He currently holds the position of both co-principal investigator and associate director for the RTI-University of North Carolina Center of Excellence in Health Promotion Economics.

Presentation Slide
Video
V. Mohan  
President & Director  
Madras Diabetes Research Foundation  

Dr. V. Mohan is the Chairman and Chief of Diabetology at Dr. Mohan’s Diabetes Specialities Centre which is a WHO Collaborating Centre for Non-communicable Diseases Prevention and Control and an IDF Centre of Education. He is also President and Director of the Madras Diabetes Research Foundation which is an ICMR Advanced Centre of Genomics of Diabetes. A student of the Madras Medical College, Dr. Mohan was awarded several prizes and medals during his undergraduate and postgraduate medical studies. Dr. Mohan has published nearly 700 papers in prestigious peer reviewed journals, including 120 chapters to text-books on diabetes. His main research interests are in Epidemiology of diabetes and its complications particularly cardiovascular disease, Genomics of diabetes and Fibro-calculous Pancreatic Diabetes. For his original research contributions, Dr. Mohan has received numerous awards including the prestigious Dr. B.C. Roy National Award by the Medical Council of India.

Abstract: There are currently 62.4 million people with diabetes in India and 77.2 million people with pre diabetes. This gives a huge window opportunity to prevent diabetes in those with pre diabetes. Using some examples of community empowerment, data on prevention activities in India will be presented.

Presentation Slide

Video
Dr. Walter C. Willett  
Chair  
Department of Nutrition, Harvard School of Public Health  

Dr. Walter Willett is Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition and Chairman of the Department of Nutrition at Harvard School of Public Health and Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Willett, an American, was born in Hart, Michigan and grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, studied food science at Michigan State University, and graduated from the University of Michigan Medical School before obtaining a Doctorate in Public Health from Harvard School of Public Health. Dr. Willett has focused much of his work over the last 25 years on the development of methods, using both questionnaire and biochemical approaches, to study the effects of diet on the occurrence of major diseases. He has applied these methods starting in 1980 in the Nurses’ Health Studies I and II and the Health Professionals Follow-up Study. Together, these cohorts that include nearly 300,000 men and women with repeated dietary assessments are providing the most detailed information on the long-term health consequences of food choices.

Dr. Willett has published over 1,100 articles, primarily on lifestyle risk factors for heart disease and cancer, and has written the textbook, Nutritional Epidemiology, published by Oxford University Press. He also has three books for the general public, Eat, Drink and Be Healthy: The Harvard Medical School Guide to Healthy Eating, which has appeared on most major bestseller lists, Eat, Drink, and Weigh Less, co-authored with Mollie Katzen, and most recently, The Fertility Diet, co-authored with Jorge Chavarro and Pat Skerrett. Dr. Willett is the most cited nutritionist internationally, and is among the five most cited persons in all fields of clinical science. He is a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences and the recipient of many national and international awards for his research.

Abstract: Research over recent years has identified specific dietary behaviors, physical activity, weight control, and not smoking that can be modified to reduce the risk of Type 2 diabetes. Actions to promote these changes can be taken at levels from the home to national, international, and specific areas to be addressed include schools, health care facilities, work sites, the food environment, the physical environment, media, economics, and surveillance. Almost everyone can contribute to this effort, and if successful, the vast majority of diabetes can be prevented.
Alfred Deakin Professor Boyd Swinburn is the Director of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention at Deakin University in Melbourne. He trained as a specialist endocrinologist in Auckland and his research career began with metabolic and clinical studies at the National Institutes of Health in Phoenix, Arizona and at the University of Auckland. He was the Medical Director of the National Heart Foundation in New Zealand from 1993-2000. His major research interest at Deakin University is centred on obesity prevention, particularly in children and adolescents, and efforts to reduce, what he has coined, the ‘obesogenic’ environment. He has developed and supported a number of community-based demonstration projects in the Barwon-South West region of Victoria, Melbourne, Auckland, Fiji, and Tonga.

He is Co-Chair of the International Obesity Task Force (IOTF) and was President of the Australia and New Zealand Obesity Society (ANZOS) from 2005-7. He has also contributed to over 25 WHO consultations and reports on obesity, authored over 300 publications and given over 400 presentations. Through these efforts he is significantly contributing to national and global efforts to reduce the obesity epidemic.

Abstract: An important component of a comprehensive approach to obesity prevention is community-based action in settings such as schools, pre-school settings, community organizations and local governments. From our long term (3-y), whole-of-community demonstration projects in the Barwon-SW region of Victoria we have shown that obesity prevalence can be reduced in pre-school, primary school and secondary school aged children. Such community-capacity building approaches were less successful in ethnic populations with a high prevalence of obesity and more culturally-centred approaches will be needed in addition. The ultimate challenge is to translate these positive results to scale across whole systems and these efforts are now underway in Australia.