1) General introduction on children and obesity
2) The situation of obesity in project countries
3) EU policy

Arianna Parodi
Gaslini Institute
Centre for the Prevention and Treatment of Childhood Obesity
Cardiff, 17-18 March 2009
Content Workshop

The views expressed in this presentation are purely the author’s own and do not reflect the views of the European Commission.

…Children are fat because they eat too much and they move not enough… It sounds too easy, isn’t it?

Nowadays there is a tendency to consider overweight/obesity as a multifactorial condition, coming out from the interaction among genetic and epigenetic factors (i.e. environmental, metabolic and behavioral factors).

The current demographic shift towards a high prevalence of overweight in western population in a relatively short time (one or two generations) is likely due to environmental causes (change in nutrition and in lifestyle).

Thus far excessive fat intake was on trial against obesity. Actually fats cannot be responsible for obesity epidemic in USA because fat consumption is drastically falling down in the last decades.

Nutrition?

It is often said that the rising prevalence of childhood obesity is linked to a larger caloric assumption. Actually, this is not completely true, because there has not been any increase in caloric intake in the last three decades (Bogalusa Heart Study and NHANES).

Thin for excesses FAT INTAKE are on trial against obesity. Actually fats cannot be responsible for obesity epidemic in USA because fat consumption is drastically falling down in the last decades.

FAT INTAKE
SWEETS/ CARBOHYDRATES INTAKE

specially high glicemic index food

A soft drink contains on average 4-5 spoons of sugar!!

unhealthy diet adverse health consequences

It may result from:
- excessive intake of soda and sweetened beverages;
- fast-food consumption;
- inadequate intakes of fresh fruits, vegetables, fiber-rich foods, and dairy and other calcium-rich foods.

Increasing obesity rates indicate a need to revisit the diet and lifestyle characteristics of children and adolescent.
Genetics

Overweight/obesity in one or both parents is one predictive factor of overweight in offspring.

- More than 300 genes, markers or chromosomal regions linked to obesity phenotypes.
- 33 mendelian disorders have been reported.

Genetic susceptibility: a determined genotype cannot necessarily cause overweight but can increase the risk in a certain environment (the so-called "obesogenic" environment).

Control mechanism of food intake is the result of an interaction from inside (brain, adipose tissue, endocrine system, digestive system) and outside (feelings, food aspect, behaviours, environment).
The Energy Balance Equation

Dietary Intake - Energy Expenditure = Stores

(What you got - What you spent = What’s Left)

Nowadays healthy diet AND movement are considered both essential in the fight against GLOBESITY.

In conclusion...

The World Health Organization describes obesity as ‘one of today’s most public health problems’ and further comments that an ‘escalating global epidemic of overweight and obesity is taking over many parts of the world.

Of even more concern is the increased prevalence of overweight and obesity (OW/OB) among children and adolescents.

World-wide, about 50% of school-aged children and adolescents are overweight or obese, with very high rates being seen in the Americas, Europe (WHO: 20% OW/OB children) and even the Middle East.

It is an ironic and rather sad fact that the two major nutritional problems that presently face the world are obesity and starvation (About 600 million people face severe energy shortage and starvation).

In recent years, the problem has gained the full attention of health care professionals, health policy experts, children’s advocates.

In Europe, the necessity of a periodic monitoring of the condition in children and adolescents has recently raised (strongly motivated from the increased perception of children OW/OB as a priority of the European public health).

2) the situation of obesity in project countries

The World Health Organization describes obesity as ‘one of today’s most public health problems’ and further comments that an ‘escalating global epidemic of overweight and obesity is taking over many parts of the world.

Of even more concern is the increased prevalence of overweight and obesity (OW/OB) among children and adolescents.

World-wide, about 50% of school-aged children and adolescents are overweight or obese, with very high rates being seen in the Americas, Europe (WHO: 20% OW/OB children) and even the Middle East.

It is an ironic and rather sad fact that the two major nutritional problems that presently face the world are obesity and starvation (About 600 million people face severe energy shortage and starvation).

In recent years, the problem has gained the full attention of health care professionals, health policy experts, children’s advocates.

In Europe, the necessity of a periodic monitoring of the condition in children and adolescents has recently raised (strongly motivated from the increased perception of children OW/OB as a priority of the European public health).

In conclusion...

The World Health Organization describes obesity as ‘one of today’s most public health problems’ and further comments that an ‘escalating global epidemic of overweight and obesity is taking over many parts of the world.

Of even more concern is the increased prevalence of overweight and obesity (OW/OB) among children and adolescents.

World-wide, about 50% of school-aged children and adolescents are overweight or obese, with very high rates being seen in the Americas, Europe (WHO: 20% OW/OB children) and even the Middle East.

It is an ironic and rather sad fact that the two major nutritional problems that presently face the world are obesity and starvation (About 600 million people face severe energy shortage and starvation).

In recent years, the problem has gained the full attention of health care professionals, health policy experts, children’s advocates.

In Europe, the necessity of a periodic monitoring of the condition in children and adolescents has recently raised (strongly motivated from the increased perception of children OW/OB as a priority of the European public health).
Behaviours and social aspects of eating from OKKIO study

- 11% = skip breakfast
- 23% = do not eat fruit and vegetables
- 82% = plentiful mid-morning snack
- School nutrition education programs are performed in 79% of the classes
- School physical activity promotion initiatives are present in 90% of the classes
- About 50% of mothers with a full-time work
- 4 out of 10 mothers of OW/OB children do not think that their sons weight is excessive

School and physical activity promotion initiatives are present in 90% of the classes.

Behaviours and social aspects of eating from OKKIO study

The White Paper promotes several actions relate directly to the functioning of the internal market (such as labelling requirements, health claims authorisations and food controls procedures) while others are part of more specific frameworks such as the Common Agricultural Policy (though the CMO for fruit and vegetables), Commission initiatives in the field of education, regional policy (structural funds) and last but not least audiovisual and media policy.

"Once set of co-ordinated actions at the EU level is considered preferable to numerous, individual actions at Member State level"
Thank you!

This presentation arises from the project ACTIVE which has received funding from the European Union, in the Framework of the Health Programme.

The views expressed in this presentation are purely the authors' own and do not reflect the views of the European Commission.