

# Preventing Childhood Obesity

## Evidence, Policy and Practice

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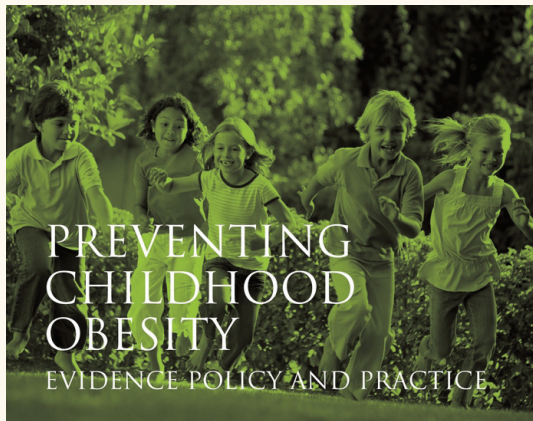
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**T**HIS IS A UNIQUE BOOK ABOUT preventing childhood obesity because contributors from around the world share their knowledge and experience, approaching and analysing the topic from an international perspective rather than the usual narrow national approach. This book also provides the latest evidence-based research, as well as policies and practices in the prevention of childhood obesity.

The book is divided into four parts. In part one, the readers are given an overall picture of

how the problem needs to be solved. What social and environmental factors drive the increase in childhood obesity? How do social, environment and cultural issues affect the solutions? This section is subdivided into five chapters which familiarise the reader with the context of childhood obesity covering topics such as: the obesity epidemic, the sharp rise of childhood obesity and how most countries of the world are affected by the epidemic. The experience of attempting to scale up the resource to non-communicable diseases in resource poor settings is also covered. The section describes the collective effort by governments, international organisations, the private sector and civil society to prevent childhood obesity. What are the ethical issues when it comes to intervention and programmes aimed at the prevention or treatment of obesity in children? This part of the book concludes by discussing the human rights which are relevant to childhood obesity. It is an excellent introduction to the subsequent chapters of the book and sets out the analytical process which the authors use to tackle the issue.

Part two commences with an overview which provides the framework for evaluation and alternative study designs in building a useful evidence base. This part of the book outlines the evidence for prevention in multiple settings from the home and family environment to school. It also describes the current evidence and practices in the prevention of childhood obesity in primary health care settings. The current evidence base

for childhood obesity prevention in primary care is poor and no clear effective approach can be advocated from the literature. It concludes with evidence on the environmental influences on obesity: food and food marketing, physical activity and poverty.

Many researchers have discussed the effect of rapid economic growth and cultural changes in developing countries on the nutritional status of communities. This part of the book gives the reader a good understanding of the relationship between the rapid growth and urbanisation in developing countries in the coexisting model of undernutrition and obesity and how it affects the prevention of childhood obesity.

In Part 3, there is an explanation of how new evidence is gathered and applied in the field. The authors have utilised their experience and previous studies to discuss this evidence and how to utilise it in different settings. They also discuss what other factors could hinder the translation of knowledge into practice. It starts with the evaluation of community based obesity interventions. What works at home and in what circumstances and why does it work? Marj Moodie points out the cost effectiveness of these interventions by using the modelling method. Jaap Seidell describes the importance of monitoring the childhood obesity epidemic and how this can help in putting actions into effect and evaluating impacts. Rebecaa Armstrong *et al.* discuss knowledge translation and exchange. This is a complex process because of the many systems that need to change to reduce the “obesogenic” environment. The last chapter discusses the guidelines on advocacy for childhood prevention and how to implement a successful advocacy campaign.

The final section of the book discusses the application of existing evidence to various sectors where policies and practices can be changed. The reader will understand how difficult it is to apply the solutions in the real world, and what tactics are needed as well as how to deal with the political agenda. It starts with defining the role of policy in obesity prevention and how to put these policies

onto government agendas around the world. Chapters 26 and 27 examine the EPODE (Ensemble Prévenons l'Obésité Des Enfants) programme which has the credentials internationally of a programme extending across many communities and several countries. The lessons from this programme, in social marketing for obesity, are discussed in the next chapter. This section also discusses very important practical issues like health promotion in schools with a focus on healthy eating and physical activity and the interventions needed for minorities in developed countries with all the complexity of culture, migration effect, marginalisation and socioeconomic disadvantages which they experience. The last chapter is written by Bill Dietz a pioneer in obesity research. He explores the lessons learned from the efforts to control tobacco consumption as a potential model for obesity prevention and control

By the end of the book, the reader will understand the real threat facing the world in fighting this disease. The problem is complex and the reader might find it difficult initially to follow the different aspects discussed in this book, but later on once he or she has an overall idea, the reader will get a good grasp of it. It would have been useful if more graphs and diagrams had been used to make the book more reader friendly. The book has been written by many authors from around the globe which gives it an international flavour and enriches its scientific content. The book also has a website where updates and resources for the books in this series are available. I recommend the book as a reference tool for professionals working in this field.

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