

Sports and Exercise Medicine: A Public Health Tool in Combating and Preventing the Side Effects of a Sedentary Lifestyle

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Abstract : Physical inactivity and unhealthy diets have contributed to a global burden of disease with increased relation to non-communicable diseases, increased risk of colon and breast cancer, high prevalence of depression, reduced quality of life and early death. The World Health Organisation's facts on Obesity show a tripling in prevalence across the European Region since the 1980s. This has led to a huge public health burden, being responsible for and 10-13% of deaths (fourth largest cause of global mortality) and 2-8% of health costs in the Region. In the UK alone, the present cost of physical inactivity has been estimated to be £8.2 billion. In 2002 a paper published in the International Journal of Epidemiology on 'sedentary' lifestyle, put into figures the increasingly worrying statistics across European countries. "Percentages of sedentary lifestyles across European countries ranged between 43.3% (Sweden) and 87.8% (Portugal)". This was especially so amongst obese subjects, less- educated people, and smokers. While in the UK's "50% of adult population in the UK is predicted to be obese by 2050." Sports and Exercise Medicine, as a specialty, has a lot to offer in targeting this globally increasing epidemic. The worrying figures and the increasing knowledge of combating and preventing this issue have led to increased awareness amongst the medical profession and more targeted interventions to reduce the burden of disease. "The public health element of the specialty is critical - this is not simply a specialty for the management of elite athletes' medical conditions - it is central to the promotion of exercise as a means of disease prevention, to enhance well-being and in the management of disease." WHO advised on creating National policies, encouraging and providing opportunities for greater physical activity, and improve the affordability, availability and accessibility of healthy foods. In the UK various different movements have been established to target this problem. The Motivate2Move, Move Eat Treat and guidelines advising specialties on targeting and encouraging exercise in the population (Sport and Exercise Medicine A Fresh Approach).

Keywords : sedentary lifestyle, obesity, public health burden, medicine

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