

Submission No. 26
(Inq into Obesity)

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From: Daryl Sadgrove
Sent: Thursday, 15 May 2008 10:20 AM
To: Committee, HAA (REPS)
Subject: Obesity Submission

To the Standing Committee on Obesity.

My name is Daryl Sadgrove and I am a health professional who has contributed widely to health policy. I have been involved in the development of a number of state and federal government initiatives including the *National Physical Activity Guidelines for Older Australians*, *Lifescrpts* resources for GP's, the Federal Government's *Be Active Australia* Strategic Plan, *Broader Health Cover* reforms for health funds, the *ABHI initiative for preventing Type 2 Diabetes*, and in shaping the *Medicare Enhanced Primary Care* program. I have also been very active in the Illawarra Region attracting nearly \$1M worth of research funding in the last 2 years for preventative interventions and have developed a number of large scale workplace health initiatives in major organisations. I also currently manage a successful multidisciplinary chronic disease management service.

Firstly I would like to admit that this submission is slightly out of character and probably not consistent with a typical representation to your committee. Nevertheless the document I have attached does sum up the collective views of many leading researchers, academics and practitioners in the physical activity industry concerning obesity. My intention is to ensure that a balanced view of obesity is considered by the committee.

The views and concerns presented in this document are important issues that will significantly impact on the development, delivery, cost effectiveness and measurement of any intervention targeted at addressing obesity.

Key issues outlined in the paper include:

- Caution should be used in interpreting research from observational and epidemiological studies related to obesity, as major flaws have been identified. None more significant than the lack of direct measurement of physical activity in the majority of these studies.
- The constituent risk factors of obesity, physical activity, physical fitness and diet have far greater implications on healthcare than any measure of body composition.
- Investing directly in increasing physical activity and physical fitness will have a far greater impact on the health system than investing in reducing body weight through caloric restriction strategies (ie surgery, pharmaceuticals, taxation on unhealthy food, or various restrictions on food).

I acknowledge that the document is from the US and is written in an emotive and, in parts, satirical fashion. Nevertheless the views expressed are evidence based and represent the views of many leading experts.

Some additional considerations:

- Weight loss that is achieved through caloric restriction alone has been associated with an increased risk of early mortality. That is, people who restrict calories in weight loss diets (controlled starvation) actually die earlier. The same outcome could be assumed from surgical and pharmacological interventions which also directly reduce caloric intake, however these studies haven't been running long enough to predict mortality end points.
- There is currently very little evidence to suggest that weight loss interventions that do not involve an improvement in physical activity or physical fitness are related to the prevention or management

of any chronic condition with the exception of knee arthritis- where reducing body weight is associated with the cause and treatment of the condition.

- Although fat cells are metabolically active, the strength of the evidence that these mechanisms are direct or causal on chronic disease is at best very weak.

My key message to the committee:

Promoting the message: *Be Active and Eat Well* is likely to have far greater implications on healthcare and the wellbeing of the Australian community than promoting *Obesity* or encouraging *Weight Reduction*. I want to emphasize that these messages ARE NOT promoting the same thing. The latter may in fact be more closely linked with poorer health outcomes.

I hope you find the document as persuasive and entertaining as I did.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below if you have any further questions and I would be happy to participate in any ongoing discussions or advisory panels.

Daryl Sadgrove
BSc (Ex.Sc.) MSc (Ex.Rehab) FAAESS AEP