



World Obesity Federation

PRESS RELEASE Embargoed Until 00.01 am Kuala Lumpur 17.03.2014

Global experts on obesity gather in Kuala Lumpur

Over 1000 of the world's leading researchers and medical experts on obesity and related diseases are gathering in Kuala Lumpur for a four day congress which opens today, Monday 17 March 2014.

This congress is the 12th International Congress on Obesity (ICO), and is the official congress of the World Obesity Federation (1). This year it is being held jointly with the Malaysian Association for the Study of Obesity (MASO). The congress will be opened by the Malaysian Minister for Health, the honourable Datuk Seri Dr S Subramaniam at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre. The opening ceremony will also feature a cultural display One Goal, a campaign promoted by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), the Asian Football Development Project, Royal DSM and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition and World Vision.

Participants in the congress will discuss a wide range of issues, from new dietary supplements to aid weight loss, the value of surgical interventions, and the latest findings of genetic research. Special attention will be paid to the rising numbers of people who are obese in both developed and developing countries(2) and the need for new ideas to prevent children becoming overweight or obese.

“Once people become obese it is very hard for them to return to a normal body weight,” said Professor Walmir Coutinho, President-elect of the World Obesity Federation. “Anything that we can do to help prevent children becoming overweight will be worthwhile.”

Child overweight affects over one in every five school-age children in developed economies and one in ten in developing economies. It raises the likelihood of later adult disease as well as affecting children directly.(3) The rise in child overweight and obesity prevalence has been dramatic, with global prevalence levels doubling every decade for the last three decades. The World Health Assembly has set targets aiming to achieve no increase in childhood and adult obesity, to be achieved by 2025.

“This International Congress comes at a time when world authorities have accepted the need for action,” said Professor Coutinho. “Governments now need to invest in obesity prevention as a priority.”

The President of the Malaysian Association for the Study of Obesity, Professor Ismail Noor, said that this event demonstrated the importance of addressing obesity in the region, A 2011 survey found 15% of Malaysian adults to be obese – some 2.5 million people – up from just 4% in 1996,

Stefan Germann, Executive Director of One Goal says “While Asia is home to more than half of the world's malnourished children, the continent's burgeoning economies are faced with a challenge affecting its children – obesity. One Goal brings together powerful forces in the region - football, development and corporate expertise to address this issue and ensure children eat, live and play right.”

The congress also marks the formal launch of the World Obesity Federation, the new name and brand for the International Association for the Study of Obesity (IASO) and the International Obesity TaskForce (IOTF). The rebrand comes at a time when obesity is escalating globally, and the need for strong and unified action to tackle it is greater than ever. The rebrand is also an opportunity to clarify two critical strands of the organisation's work: the prevention of obesity through effective policies, and efforts to educate and train clinicians to enhance the treatment and care of people with obesity.

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1. The World Obesity Federation (formerly the International Association for the Study of Obesity and its policy section, the International Obesity TaskForce) has over 30,000 members in over 50 national and regional associations. The World Obesity Federation is a non-governmental professional society in official relations with the World Health Organization.
2. Obesity has reached epidemic proportions globally and is becoming prevalent in low- and middle-income countries, with over 60% of the world's obese people living in developing countries. More than 2.6 million people are dying from obesity-related diseases each year as a result of being overweight.
3. Obese children are at risk of many early signs of chronic disease, including raised blood pressure and raised blood lipids, which are the early indicators for cardiovascular disease, raised blood sugar levels and early stages of diabetes, fatty livers, orthopaedic problems and other physical disorders. In addition, obese children are at risk of greater social stresses and suffer higher levels of psycho-social disorders, achieve lower school grades, enter employment at lower pay levels and are less likely to rise to senior positions.