The Lancet Commission on Obesity

The Lancet Commission on Obesity[1] consists of 23 Commissioners from 14 countries representing 22 disciplines (overleaf), and was established following two successful Lancet Series on Obesity.[2] The Commission's partners are The Lancet, University of Auckland, The George Washington University, and World Obesity Federation. The Commission is co-chaired by Boyd Swinburn MD, FRACP, Professor of Population Nutrition and Global Health, University of Auckland and William Dietz MD, PhD, Professor and Chair, Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness, The George Washington University.

The problems

Obesity and unhealthy diets are the biggest contributors to the global burden of disease and are rapidly increasing in most countries. Countries have committed to policy actions to meet the global goal of halting the increase in obesity by 2025, but the implementation of these policies has been patchy and inadequate. Accountability systems are urgently needed to stimulate action. In addition, obesity and climate change are both consequences of overconsumption, yet their systemic relationships and solutions have only begun to be explored. For example, livestock production is a major contributor to greenhouse gasses, and meat consumption also contributes to obesity. However, solutions to reduce meat consumption will straddle multiple sectors. Climate change is destabilizing global food production and will likely increase food insecurity. In low- and middle-income countries, urbanization and changes to food systems and dietary patterns have led to the co-occurrence of undernutrition and obesity in the same population and even in the same household. Systemic and integrated solutions are needed to address these major global systemic problems.

The Commission's goals

1. To stimulate action and strengthen accountability systems for existing policy commitments to reduce obesity and its related inequalities at national and global levels
2. To identify common systemic drivers and solutions for obesity, undernutrition, and climate change and devise innovative, sustainable, and scalable approaches to reorient those systems

Progress and plans

At its first meeting in February 2016, the Commission began to map the interplay of existing systems affecting obesity, undernutrition and climate change, and established several promising strategies to develop a comprehensive understanding of the systemic causes and solutions.

The initial deliverable for the Commission is the publication of a substantive foundation paper in Lancet in early 2018. To develop that publication, working groups have been formed to address monitoring and accountability, model development, implementation case studies, governance and power analysis, human rights approaches, and disruptive innovations. We expect to discover and promulgate inapparent and novel solutions, create insights to strengthen existing strategies, help prioritize solutions based on reach and sustainability, expand and strengthen the systems model by testing it with multiple stakeholders, and stress-test novel policy options with policy-makers. Eventually, we expect that quantitative models will allow much more accurate assessments of impacts, time-lags, costs, and wider systems effects of interventions. Identifying the connections between obesity and undernutrition will help to bring those two separate worlds together to work toward a recalibrated food system and improved global nutrition. Likewise, linking the drivers of obesity and climate change will identify shared solutions through the food and urban systems.

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[1] Lancet Commission on Obesity http://thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(15)00722-9/abstract www.lancetobesity.info
[2] Lancet Series on Obesity 1, 2011 http://www.thelancet.com/series/obesity Lancet Series on Obesity 2, 2015 http://www.thelancet.com/series/obesity-2015

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Commissioners	Position	Country	Expertise
Boyd Swinburn, MD, FRACP	Professor of Population Nutrition and Global Health, University of Auckland	New Zealand	Global obesity, prevention, food policy
William Dietz, MD, PhD	Professor, George Washington University	USA	Childhood obesity, public health policy
Vincent Atkins, MSc, LLB	Trade Policy Advisor, CARICOM	Barbados	Trade, law, agriculture
Alejandro Calvillo, PhD	Director, El Poder del Consumidor (Consumer Power)	Mexico	Consumer advocacy, food policy
Olivier De Schutter, PhD	Professor, Center for Philosophy of Law, Université catholique de Louvain	Belgium	Human rights, law, sustainable food
Majid Ezzati, MD	Professor of Global Environmental Health, Imperial College London	UK	Epidemiology, monitoring systems
Sharon Friel, PhD	Professor of Health Equity and Director RegNet School of Regulation and Global Governance, Australia National University	Australia	Health equity, social determinants of health, public policy
Shifalika Goenka, MD, PhD	Associate Professor, Public Health Institute of India	India	Medicine, physical activity promotion
Ross Hammond, PhD	Director, Center on Social Dynamics and Policy, The Brookings Institution	USA	Systems science, modelling, economics
Gerard Hastings, PhD	Professor, Stirling University & L'École des Hautes Etudes en Santé Publique'	UK	Marketing, social marketing
Corinna Hawkes, PhD	Professor, City University London	UK	Food policy, food systems, undernutrition
Mario Herrero, PhD	Chief Research Scientist and Science Leader at CSIRO Agriculture	Australia	Climate change, agriculture, land use
Peter Hovmand, PhD	Director, Social System Design Lab, Washington University in St. Louis	USA	Systems science and computational models
Mark Howden, PhD	Professor, Australia National University	Australia	Climate change, urban systems, agriculture
Harriet Kuhnlein, PhD	Founding Director, Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Environment, McGill University	Canada	Indigenous Peoples' food systems and nutrition
Shiriki Kumanyika, PhD	Emeritus Professor, University of Pennsylvania	USA	Global obesity, health inequalities
Bagher Larijani, MD	Professor of Endocrinology, Tehran University of Medical Science	Iran	Endocrinology, clinical services, public policy
Tim Lobstein, PhD	Director of Policy, World Obesity Federation	UK	Global obesity, food policy, advocacy
Victor Matsudo, MD	Director, Physical Fitness Research Laboratory of Sao Caetano do Sul	Brazil	Physical activity promotion, advocacy
Gareth Morgan, PhD	Morgan Foundation, Wellington	New Zealand	Economics, business, investment
An Pan, MD	Huazhong University of Science and Technology	China	Medicine, nutritional epidemiology
David Patterson, LLM, MSc	Senior Legal Expert, Health, International Development Law Organization	Netherlands	Health, law and development
Warren Smit, PhD	Director of the CityLab Programme, African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town	South Africa	Urban planning, environments & health