



PRESS RELEASE

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Researchers publish findings of a €3.7m spotlight on obesity

A cross-European team of researchers have reported the results of the four-year, €3.7m SPOTLIGHT study into measures to prevent adult obesity and the role of the environment. They find that urban planners have a responsibility to ensure that the neighbourhoods they design will promote healthy behaviour, and better still if the environment can encourage social networking and community support.

The researchers also find that local interventions to prevent obesity and encourage healthy behaviour need to be adapted to local needs, and the planning of interventions should involve the people being targeted. This may require ‘two-phase’ funding, with an initial fund for participatory design and piloting of a project, and a second phase to implement it if the initial phase shows promise.

“Health promotion in communities is important, and can be successful,” said SPOTLIGHT project coordinator Dr Jeroen Lakerveld of the VU University Medical Center, Amsterdam. “But short-term funding for community projects may lead to frustration and poor project morale. The agencies that supply funding need to realise that sustained support is needed to get sustained results. Promoting strong communities and re-designing the built environment can contribute significantly to sustainable changes in health behaviour.”

A summary of the project findings is available here:

http://www.worldobesity.org/site_media/uploads/SPOTLIGHT_for_policy-making-summary.pdf

The SPOTLIGHT project undertook surveys of people’s views on what constituted their local environment and investigated tools such as Google StreetView to assess the quality of neighbourhoods. A set of scientific papers and a press release can be accessed here:

http://www.worldobesity.org/site_media/uploads/SPOTLIGHT-How_local_neighbourhoods_can_raise_your_obesity_risk.pdf

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The SPOTLIGHT project is a cross-European research project and stands for *sustainable prevention of obesity through integrated strategies*. Partners in the research consortium include

- VU University Medical Center (The Netherlands)
- The University of Lisbon (Portugal)
- The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (United Kingdom)
- The European Association for the Study of Obesity
- The University of Bergen (Norway)
- The University of Oxford (United Kingdom)
- Ghent University (Belgium)
- Metropolitan University College Copenhagen (Denmark)
- Maastricht University (The Netherlands)
- Université Paris 13 (France)
- University of Debrecen (Hungary)
- Blox Group (The Netherlands)
- The World Obesity Federation

World Obesity Federation is the new name for the International Association for the Study of Obesity (IASO) and International Obesity TaskForce (IOTF). We represent professional members of the scientific, medical and research communities from over 50 regional and national obesity associations. Through this global community we work to alert the world to the growing crisis caused by soaring levels of obesity and to drive global efforts to reduce, prevent and treat obesity.

Details at www.worldobesity.org.