
WMA STATEMENT ON THE PHYSICIAN'S ROLE IN OBESITY

Adopted by the 57th WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

PREAMBLE

1. Obesity is one of the single most important health issues facing the world in the twenty-first century, affecting all countries and socio-economic groups and representing a serious drain on health care resources.
2. Obesity has complex origins linked to economic and social changes in society including the obesogenic environment within which much of the population lives.
3. Therefore the WMA urges physicians to use their roles as leaders to advocate for recognition by national health authorities that reduction in obesity should be a priority, with culturally appropriate policies involving physicians and other key stakeholders.

THE WMA RECOMMENDS THAT PHYSICIANS:

1. Lead the development of societal changes that emphasize environments which support healthy food choices and regular exercise or physical activity for all people;
2. Individually and through medical associations, express concern that excessive television viewing and video game playing are impediments to physical activity among children and adolescents in many countries;
3. Encourage individuals to make healthy choices;
4. Recognise the role of personal decision making and the adverse influences exerted by current environments;
5. Recognise that collection and evaluation of data can contribute to evidence based management, and should be part of routine medical screening and evaluation throughout life;
6. Encourage the development of life skills that contribute to a healthy lifestyle in all persons and to better public knowledge of healthy diets, exercise and the dangers of smoking and excess alcohol consumption;

Obesity

7. Contribute to the development of better assessment tools and databases to enable better targeted and evaluated interventions;
8. Ensure that obesity, its causes and management remain part of continuing professional development programmes for health care workers, including physicians;
9. Use pharmacotherapy and bariatric surgery consistent with evidence-based guidelines and an assessment of the risks and benefits associated with such therapies.

RESCINDED