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How obesity is cutting away Longevity and other Global Advances in Development and Health, and What to Do about It

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Abstract

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) finalizing in 2015 and the 25th Anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 2019 celebrated the achievement of several of their indicators. We use data from the United Nations (UN), the World Health Organization (WHO), and other sources to conduct a demographic and epidemiological comparative analysis of main global trends spanning 30 to 50 years. They unmistakably confirm how medical and living standards progress in the world have extended life expectancy, including longevity. However, data also demonstrate how physical inactivity, sedentarism, and inadequate dieting are eroding such gains and producing the new phenomenon of overweight and obesity. Obesity is occurring at all ages and regions of the world. In the month addressing world diabetes, we show how obesity and diabetes are increasingly associated with cancer and cardiovascular disease, risk factors for premature mortality and the rise of the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCD). What to do about it? We propose including overweight and obesity in the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), convene a UN/WHO world meeting to make countries adopt conventions to combat this phenomenon. Countries will formulate policies to educate and support their populations on mental well-being, proper dieting and exercise, create gyms and sport centers in urban areas, and enact legislation for workplaces to allow physical activity among workers, while restricting and taxing sugary and processed drinks and foods. These timely actions should stop the current tug-of-war between longevity and obesity, and ensure quality of life at older ages.

Biography

Dr Alfredo L. Fort completed his MD in Perú, followed by Masters and PhD degrees at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He is adjunct professor at the US University of North Carolina School of Public Health and invited lecturer at several US and international universities. He is former senior officer at the World Health Organization in Geneva and the United Nations for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Population (UNFPA) in New York. Dr. Fort is currently an Independent Consultant and reviewer of international journals and publications, and has published more than 25 papers in reputed journals.

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