

19TH WORLD OBESITY CONGRESS

July 10-11, 2018 Bangkok, Thailand



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The associations of obesity with cardiometabolic risks and stress among multi-ethnic women in a developing country

Statement of the Problem: Obesity has emerged as a public health epidemic over decades in developed countries. Currently, developing countries are also experiencing an increasing trend in obesity. Sedentary lifestyle and easy accessibility to highly palatable nutrient-dense foods create an environment that promotes overweight and obesity. Stress, often arising from poor interpersonal relationships, job or unemployment stress, poor self-esteem and low socioeconomic status has been associated with obesity and its comorbidities. This presentation will highlight the associations of obesity with cardiometabolic risks and stress among a group of multi-ethnic women in Malaysia.

Methodology: This is the cross-sectional findings of a teacher's cohort study (n=14,228). This study was conducted in six states within Peninsular Malaysia. Multistage sampling was carried out to recruit participants from the school setting. Data collection included a questionnaire survey and health assessment. Information collected in the questionnaire were socio-demographic characteristics, participants' medical history and family history of chronic diseases, teaching characteristics, lifestyle behaviors (smoking, alcohol consumption and physical activities), a food frequency questionnaire, the Job Content Questionnaire (JCQ); Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS21); health related quality of life (SF12-V2), etc. Health assessment included anthropometric measurements, systolic and diastolic blood pressure, full lipid profile and fasting blood glucose. All data were analyzed using STATA 14.0.

Result: Among the female teachers (n=11,574), majority were Malays (75%), followed by Chinese (17.3%), Indians (6.9%) and others. About one third of them were overweight and 19.3% were obese, while one fifth of them had metabolic syndrome. Overweight and obese participants were more likely to have metabolic syndrome (OR: 10.9, 95% CI: 9.6, 12.5). After adjusted for potential confounders, obesity was associated with poorer physical health but not mental health/stress.

Conclusion & Significance: The prevalence of overweight and obesity among the participants was comparable with the national statistics. Obesity was found to be associated with cardiometabolic risks and poorer physical health. Appropriate interventions should be implemented to control obesity to prevent cardiovascular diseases.

Biography

Foong Ming Moy currently works as an Associate Professor in the University of Malaya, Malaysia. Her research interests include translational research/trials in the prevention of non-communicable diseases in the community setting, workplace wellness and the effects of lifestyle behaviors on non-communicable diseases. Currently, she heads a cohort study comprising of almost 15,000 teachers from the Peninsular Malaysia. She has published more than 80 manuscripts in peer review journals. She initiated and established the University of Malaya Wellness Program in 2008 and Coordinated the program until 2013. She is a Member of the Editorial Board of the Malaysian Journal of Nutrition. She also reviews manuscripts for both local and international journals.

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