Foreword

The Nutrition Reviews supplement you have in your hands contains the papers presented at the Fifth Nestlé Nutrition Conference held October 7-8 2004 in Mexico City, Mexico. This conference, which was made possible by financial support to the Mexican Health Foundation’s Nestlé Nutrition Fund from Nestlé Mexico, was focused on strategies to control and prevent obesity, with an emphasis on diet and physical exercise. Primarily, we visualized this fifth conference as a follow-up to the previous conference of 2002, which reviewed some aspects of the homeostasis of body weight regulation with an emphasis on obesity (Nutrition Reviews 2004; 62[7 part 2]:S67–S180). We think such a follow-up will contribute to a better understanding of the resources that may help in the prevention of obesity and some of its comorbidities, which are rapidly growing public health problems.

In a position paper, Dr. Lewis Kuller discusses the scientific and methodological bases of prevention strategies, and in a second paper illustrates these principles in the prevention of hypercholesterolemia. He stresses the potential benefits of primary prevention that can be extended to cover entire populations. Dr. Catherine Champagne discusses the outcomes of the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet in the control of hypertension, as well as its collateral effects on obesity and comorbidities.

Most prevention strategies to control and reduce obesity and its comorbidities rely on changes in physical activity level, and this topic is presented by Dr. John Jakicic. A paper on the Mediterranean diet is reviewed by Dr. Luis Serra-Majem. Much has been said and published on the benefits of the Mediterranean diet, but a thorough review of its effects on prevention was lacking. Dr. Serra-Majem reviews the concepts, definitions, and effects of this diet, and may help in clarifying a debated issue.

Another topic of the conference was related to lifestyle changes aimed at preventing or controlling obesity and its comorbidities. Dr. Karen Donato of the US National Institutes of Health describes a program that was launched because of the need for public health measures to produce massive lifestyle changes. The US national education programs are a good example of ways to change lifestyles in large populations.

The topic of interactions between public health measures and socioeconomic levels and other sociocultural characteristics, such as ethnicity, are discussed by Dr. Shiriki Kumanyika, who demonstrates the power of cultural aspects in the impact on different minority groups.

Two papers are presented relating to the role that the food industry may play to help in addressing the obesity epidemic. Dr. Hillary Green from Nestlé Corporation presents a summary of data and declarations that gives the position of her firm on obesity prevention at a worldwide level. Dr. Lee Grotz, as a representative of the US food industry as a whole, reviews the responsibilities of the industry in the prevention of obesity in the United States.

We hope that these papers from the Fifth Nestlé Nutrition Conference in this supplement will contribute to discussions on some of our options to deal with obesity as a health problem that affects nearly all populations independently of socioeconomic level. We feel that the information shown in this supplement may help researchers of any country.

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