

NOF news: The *State of the Nation's Waistline 2015* report

Developed in response to the growing concerns about obesity, the National Obesity Forum's *State of the Nation's Waistline 2015* report sets out a suite of recommendations that aim to help reduce the incidence of obesity and offer solutions for management of this disease, which is vital before this condition cripples an already ailing NHS. Sadly, this year's report does not present an outlook any more optimistic than the 2014 report.

The very influential McKinsey report drew our attention to the fact that obesity costs more than terrorism and, at a cost of £44.7 billion in 2012, is second only to smoking in terms of economic burden in the UK (Dobbs et al, 2014). The report also shows how Dame Sally Davies, the Chief Medical Officer for England, notes that only 6% of Britons considered themselves to be obese (Davies, 2014), whilst the actual figures show that, since 1993, the rate of obesity has increased from 16.4% to 25.1% in women and from 13.2% to 24.4% in men (Health and Social Care Information Centre, 2014). One quarter of us are now obese. Obesity has become normalised, and a public and clinical tolerance has developed which has led to a burgeoning health problem that is not being adequately addressed. With this deluge of information at the fingertips of the public, there is a risk that we, as a population, have started to become desensitised to the scale of the problem.

These alarming findings, coupled with the state of childhood obesity, now considered by the Royal College of GPs (2014) to be a national emergency, show that we are now at a critical point. The public remains largely unaware of this health crisis and the effect it is having on the local and national services, which we all rely on.

There is, however, some optimism in the report; Simon Stevens, the Chief Executive of NHS England, has set obesity as a national priority in his *Five Year Forward View*. Promoting healthy eating and an increase in physical activity becomes

an imperative for the NHS, local government and workplaces, as well as on a personal level. There continues to be a battle against the constant availability of unhealthy, energy-dense food and the lack of resources to facilitate and empower people to become more active.

There are several recommendations that form the backbone of the report: making tackling obesity a priority of the next Government, the appointment of an "obesity tsar" to ensure cross-government working to address the problem and improving referral pathways to specialist weight management support.

The regularity with which weight management is discussed in the newspapers and on television – whether in terms of healthy eating advice or the latest conclusions on obesity in the UK – is in some ways testament to how National Obesity Awareness Week struck a chord with public sentiment. Rather than adding to the data sets already in the public domain, the *State of the Nation's Waistline 2015* sought to collate that information to demonstrate the importance of addressing the UK's obesity crisis, and then to make a series of recommendations as to how this crisis can and should be addressed, building on guidance issued previously.

These are recommendations that are sorely needed; without them, we face an uphill struggle to address one of the greatest public health crises of our generation. ■

The *State of the Nation's Waistline 2015* report can be read in full at: <http://bit.ly/1CKe8ly>

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