

Australia's Public Health Policy On Obesity

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Introduction

"Public Health" is a multidisciplinary topic for research and scientific studies. It has been a concern to scholars from different fields, such as social sciences, psychology, medicine, public administration, technology, and education and communication disciplines.

Communication and information on health issues at the public level in society is an important concern to the government and policymakers of a nation. Official institutions, apart from academics, are putting efforts into obtaining research-based data for valid and helpful information to be used as background knowledge while devising public health policies. One of the major public health issues in nations around the world is the increasing rate of childhood obesity, alongside lacking health awareness among parents and peer groups. Over the past decade, obesity has increased in children and adolescents. Many an intervention have been associated with obesity and overweight in children, and some bad consequences of physical, psychological, and social nature related to childhood obesity have been anticipated. Public health officials and social institutions have been looking for the factors that cause childhood obesity, and intervention strategies of various types are used for the prevention and control of these causes.

Health communication focuses on the relationship between the communication of health-related issues and the delivery of health education and healthcare to individuals in society.

Healthcare organizations and agencies adopt the most advisable practice and best applicable standardized care for patients to minimize any potential harm to them. Authorities and regulatory bodies act as guidelines and oversight procedures developers for healthcare agencies to avoid violations and maintain standardized healthcare practices in society (Kernan et al., 2014).

Healthcare morals and bioethics are the two terms that substitute each other in general health. Bioethics in the field of healthcare is a coming of the 1900s that arrangements with the ethical norms and issues identified with healthcare administrations. (Karen) Preventable, certain, and unfriendly blunders ought to be accounted for by patients as well as by the authoritative revealing frameworks (IOM, 2000). Conjure of helpful benefits gives specialists and doctors a hand in withholding the reports of mistakes from patients if, on the therapeutic premise, they feel that revelation of such data can conceivably hurt the patients in any case as the patient might be sincerely depleted, flimsy and discouraged (Beauchamp and Childress, 2013). The data on a patient's condition should be kept classified unless it might be utilized for the patient's advantage, according to healthcare, and the patient gives assent on discharging it (Karen).

Health mind associations and offices embrace the most appropriate practice and the best material institutionalized to administer to patients to limit any potential mischief to them. Experts and administrative bodies go about as rule and oversight systems designers for healthcare offices to dodge infringement and keep up institutionalized healthcare rehearsals in the general public (Karen, 2014).

. Communication is a central concept in the provision of effective healthcare awareness to the public. To understand the problem and needs of the public, “no decision about me without me”, it is important to have effective listening skills and to communicate their “awareness” to a satisfactory level. Courage involves the implementation of the right practice of care for the individual, the innovative approach, and the personal strength to take a stance for righteousness. Commitment means the ultimate dedication to the governmental care for the public without ambiguities and diversion. Communication builds strength to meet the challenges in the field of public policymaking overall (Baillie & Black, 2015).

Australia’s Public Health Policy On Obesity

The Public Health Association of Australia has devised a policy for the promotion of a healthy weight for individuals. The policy is titled “Promoting Healthy Weight Policy.” The policy serves majorly the purposes of;

- Actively participating in the promotion of healthy weight for young children, adolescents, and adults,
- Providing recommendations to the government and other involved agencies to devise and achieve a multidimensional and multi-sectorial approach to tackle the problem of prevailing obesity in children and adults in a systematically integrated way.
- Advocacy of appropriately addressing the high prevalence rate of obesity in National Nutrition Policy.
- Encouraging the federal Ministry for Health and NHMRC to allocate adequate resources to the Australian National Preventative Health Agency so that it can tackle the problem of obesity and its prevalence in Australia.
- Informing and mobilizing the members to support the policy.
- Monitoring the implementation progress of all the recommendations made by the committee.

However, despite devising several plans and strategies and national policies, overweight in Australian kids and adults still prevails at an abnormal rate. The problem of being overweight is related to a number of health and well-being issues, as well as economic and social costs in the present and future for society. There is no single policy or plan that can solely help reverse the prevalence of obesity in society, and there is a requirement to adopt a multidimensional and integrated policy and implementation plan involving multiple sectors in order to better fight the chronic problem of the prevalence of obesity. Various public and private sectors, including all levels of official intermediaries

and regulatory bodies, the food industry, mass media agencies, and educational sectors, and parental awareness need to be integrated into a health policy to tackle the problem from every possible direction. Numerous interventions have proven to help reduce the problem of the high prevalence of obesity in society. The prevention of overweight and obesity in children should be given priority by developing and implementing policies and action plans, including official regulations, wherever and whenever needed. Measures to reduce the prevalence of obesity and overweight in adult members of society concurrently should be pursued. With sufficient funding and support, every possible action of the Preventative Health Taskforce “Preventative Health Taskforce Roadmap for Action” must immediately be enacted to ensure the success of the plans.

Promoting Healthy Weight Policy: The Prevention And Management Of Overweight And Obesity In Australia.

Based on the research from national and international sources, the Public Health Association of Australia has noted the problem of the prevalence of obesity and overweight in the country based on numerous small and large national and international types of research.

According to the World Health Organization, an increased number of not only developing but developed countries as well are facing a threatening level of obesity and overweight prevalence in young children and adolescents. Obesity has been ranked as one of the top ten preventable health conditions by the World Health Organization, requiring urgent priority and attention. A dramatically substantial increase in the obesity rate among young children over the last decade has been declared by WHO as the most serious health challenge of the twenty-first century.

Public health Ontario research “Addressing Obesity in Children and Youth” was secondary data-based research conducted with librarian; s assistance using grey literature sources and electronic databases. The researchers presented the report in April 2012. The research reviewed the articles and papers published on four variables: obesity, interventions, effectiveness, and child. A total of 838 papers identified interventions that were effective for the prevention of childhood obesity. Most of the reviews were found to be focusing on the children and youth victimized by obesity in a school setting and had the intervention of nutritional habits and physical activity. Five of the research papers’ results demonstrated that school-based interventions were successful in reducing the anthropometric outcomes of the groups compared. However, the two studies did not show any significant difference in the outcome of the groups in the experiment.

Another research has shown that obesity and overweight prevalence in children aged from five to seventeen years was established by approximately 26% during the year 2011-2012; obesity prevailed by 7.6% and overweight by 17.7%. The National Health and Medical Research Council in Australia has declared obesity and overweight as major public health problems that have contributed to 7.6% of

premature deaths and disabilities among children and have been recognized as the largest risk factor for behavioural and biomedical health phenomena.

The costs associated with obesity and overweight are extremely high in the economic and social spheres. In 2008, the estimated cost of obesity in Australia was 58 billion dollars, which comprised 8.3 billion financial costs associated with it and 49.9 billion dollars on account of well-being loss. Approximately 80% of overweight kids grow up as overweight adults because, being obese, it is difficult for them to lose weight through physical activities and nutritional plans.

Centre for Community Child Health Royal Children's Hospital's research team prepared a report for OzChild: Children Australia titled *"To promote awareness of the risk factors that contribute to childhood obesity and assess the ability of parents to develop shared strategies to reduce such risks."* The researchers posited that the change in lifestyles of children and adolescents in developed countries has changed their physical activity levels as well as their eating and nutritional habits. The interventions studied were physical activity and eating behaviours developed by influences from family, schools, and socioeconomic factors. The report suggested that the nutrition education provided in schools focuses not only on educating the kids on nutrition but also on developing the behaviours and skills related to food preparation, preservation, sociocultural aspects of eating, and eating habits linked with personal grooming and positive body image (Lehmann et al., 2014).

Recommended Steps

The Public Health Association of Australia believes and suggests the following actions to be taken on a priority basis to prevent the accelerating rate of obesity and overweight prevalence among children and adults in Australia;

1. Overweight and obesity should be set as priority health issues of the country.
2. A national obesity task force should be established so that efforts for coordinating and implementing the agenda by providing capacity can be increased, targets can be set, and accordingly, monitoring and reporting can be achieved in a measurable manner.
3. There should be a continuous supply of funds required for the development of an action plan, monitoring, and evaluation of a healthy weight plan.
4. The coordination of local governments and private sector industries, along with non-profit and non-governmental organizations, should be ensured to devise the modified plans according to the needs and demands of the respective population.
5. Federal institutions and non-governmental organizations should support and pursue scientific research to identify the causes and effective interventions that can help reverse the prevalence rate of overweight and obesity. (Healy et al., 2015)

Impact And Importance Of Policies

A number of other recommendations and endorsements are present in the National Health Policy of Australia for the Prevention of Obesity and Overweight, however, it is important to analyze that why such policies are important and necessary to be devised and implemented on a priority basis. Numerous types of research have demonstrated that public health policies and regulations have a great impact on the health phenomena prevailing in the respective society.

Advocacy and lobbying efforts can help reduce the intensity of the prevalence of obesity among children and adults by encouraging policymakers and practitioners in the field of public health to formulate policies and plans as interventions to address the alarming problem of obesity prevailing in society. Policies can be devised in a variety of forms to create a multidimensional approach to intervening in the phenomenon of obesity. For instance, legislative policies, school-based policies, nutritional policies, integrated policies, parental awareness policies, and mass-mediated communication policies for public health.

Public policies are generally initiated through advocacy campaigns. Advocacy can be referred to as speaking on behalf of the public regarding some issue of concern to the public. Advocacy campaigns facilitate public policies at various levels. These campaigns work at local, community, state, national and international levels to promote the cause. Advocacy campaigns are aided by evidenced data, making them well-constructed, appealing, and persuasive. As per childhood obesity prevalence, advocacy campaigns tend to speak for the health of children and their general well-being. Such campaigns interconnect the local or state-level activities based on health issues with the federal level policies and campaigns on the same issue. As they say, "All politics is local, and all policies are local." Policy devised and regulated at any level, state, federal or local, is ultimately implemented at the local level (Brownson & Eyler, 2016).

The impact of policies on the reduction of obesity and overweight is estimated to increase at local, state, and national levels. Australian public policy to address the obesity and overweight problem prompts six areas to function. These are focused on the availability of healthy food choices to kids relatively at ease, for instance, in their areas of residence, play, and learning. Other areas of function focus are "school-based smart food" where the standards of nutrition are improved in food and drinks such as reducing the consumption of drinks with processed sugar. Advertising of sugary drinks and junk foods is also an area of focus in the public health policy on obesity. Making children more physically active by providing nearby parks and playgrounds with safety measures is also a public-level intervention to prevent childhood obesity. (Croyden et al., 2018).

Conclusion

On a conclusive note, it is recognized that public policies play an important role in the prevention of the prevalence of obesity in children and adults. The obesity reduction and prevention approach

should encompass the economic and social cost associated with the phenomenon of the prevalence of obesity in individuals in society, especially children who tend to grow as obese adults if obese. The present paper summarizes the importance of public health policies, their communication, and campaigns, and it highlights Australia's public health policy for the prevention and reduction of obesity. It is demonstrated that multidimensional and integrated policies of various forms, such as legislative, educational, communicative, and nutritional policies, can work as the most effective interventions for the biggest health challenge of the twenty-first century.

Research-based policies tend to be more effective as they have sound background knowledge and support from evidence. It is suggested that research-based policies focusing on the socio-economic perspective of reducing obesity and its prevalence can bring societal changes. Childhood obesity policies especially require multidisciplinary background knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon. As mentioned earlier, no single approach to tackle and eradicate the problem of childhood obesity is enough. All levels of government and sectors of society have to contribute to formulating the most effective policies and subsequent action plans to eradicate the problem of overweight and obesity.

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