

Research Assessment #8

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Subject: Obesity and Public Health

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Schneider, Mary Ellen. "Public health impact of growing obesity epidemic is huge: 'cannot be medicalized away'." *Family Practice News*, 1 Feb. 2004, p. 113. *Health & Wellness Resource Center*, <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A113852810/HWRC?u=j043905001&sid=HWR C&xid=e962255f>. Accessed 16 Nov. 2018.

Author: Mary Ellen, Paul Campos, Abigail Saguy, Paul Ernsberger, Eric Oliver, and Glenn Gaesser

Assessment: Research

Last year, I research obesity in healthcare and gained a little bit of background surrounding the analysis and conclusions that seemed widely accepted at the time. However, the more I research the topic, the more I have come to realize that the “epidemic” of obesity is quite the divisive topic in the healthcare world. While some support the argument that the growing rate of obesity in this country is alarming, others argue that the evidence that backs that claim is false. To get a better understanding of what exactly both sides are arguing, I research two separate articles that have vastly differing views surrounding the same topic.

Firstly, the article by Mary Ellen, entitled “Public health impact of growing obesity epidemic is huge: 'cannot be medicalized away’”, explains that the issue of obesity is no longer a problem concerning the physician and the patient. Rather, it is an issue that concerns public health, the grouping of people that serve as the backbone to the healthcare field. While Ellen believes that the start to solving the obesity epidemic lies in the doctor patient interactions, it should be fueled by members of the CDC and healthcare administrators that oversee the processes of the facility. In an attempt to promote physical activity amongst the general population, Insurers have recently started to offer physical activity programs for a variety of reasons, including improving disease management, averting medical costs, being good corporate citizens, and gaining a competitive advantage in the marketplace. However, some health plans resist offering fitness programs because of limited evidence of the effectiveness of exercise in preventing disease and a lack of demand from employers, who report a lack of interest among their employees. This lack of urgency in the healthcare field for the overcoming of the obesity epidemic has the same roots that I mentioned before - people just aren't believing the evidence. From my point of view and the “research” that I have gathered purely through observing my peers, I am a believe that obesity and being overweight

are large problems in this society that need to be addressed. However, I do see the side that claims the evidence isn't compelling enough because in many cases it isn't.

The contradiction of evidence leads me into the next article that I researched that spoke from the opposite view of the article by Mary Ellen. Written by Paul Campos, Abigail Saguy, Paul Ernsberger, Eric Oliver, and Glenn Gaesser, they believe that the available scientific data neither support alarmist claims about obesity nor justify diverting scarce resources away from far more pressing public health issues. In their article, the average human weight has only increased by 3-5 kg and has not proven any terrible healthcare detriments either. Through a series of tests, this group of authors actually found that the 'ideal' weight for longevity was 'overweight' rather than the 'healthy' BMI that has been advertised for so long. This evidence could also be due to the large amount of "skinny" people that are extremely unhealthy due to an increase in eating disorders like anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

In either case, the argument, based on my limited knowledge, can be made on both sides. However, the rate of children that are obese keeps going up in general polls and as America becomes increasingly healthier, the amount of money we spend on healthcare keeps increasing. As Health and Human Services Department Secretary Tommy G. Thompson said, "We spend all this money in America waiting for you to get sick, then we spend so much to get you well, and we spend just a small token to prevent people from getting ill in the first place." There are so many resources going in to treating the sick but there aren't enough resources being allocated to keeping the healthy. In the field of public health and as the baby boomer population begins to grey, the presence of heart disease will only increase in geriatric care so the roots of the large cardiovascular mess need to be found and solved soon.