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Kuwait : Obesity

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Obesity Problems in Kuwait

By: Sabrina DiFiori



Introduction

In this brief I will be assessing a public health problem in Kuwait, a small country located in Western Asia. The population is approximately 4.05 million and consists of mostly Kuwaiti, Arab and Asian people. Their primary religion is Muslim and their official language is Arabic (World Atlas n.d.). The type of government that is established in Kuwait is authoritative. Authoritarianism can be defined as “the principle of submission to authority, as opposed to individual freedom of thought and action” (Britannica n.d.). In other words, the government in Kuwait holds most of the control over its citizens. One of the major challenges that Kuwait struggles with are structural imbalances within their economy. These structural imbalances are due to their authoritarian government system because when one person holds all power, decisions usually tend to be made in the best interest of that person and not the country as a whole.

Public Health Issue

The major public health issue that Kuwait suffers from most is obesity. According to the Food Security Index update, “Kuwait has the world’s highest percentage of obese people – 42.8% of its population is obese” (Starling 1, 2014). Obesity is a major problem because not only can it physically enable a person from activity, but it can also lead to many other underlying diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. According to the International Association for the Study of Obesity (IASO), “this tiny nation of fewer than three million leads the eastern

Mediterranean

for obesity

prevalence among men (36%) and women (48%)” (Hutchins 1, 2012).

Risk Factor

A major risk factor that affects Kuwait’s large population of obese people is the weather. According to the CNN, “The country's harsh climate -- in which daytime temperatures can reach over 50 C, or 122 F -- makes it difficult to undertake physical activity, encouraging a sedentary lifestyle” (Verjee & Hume 1, 2012).

Intervention

One type of intervention that people will use to attempt to fix obesity is stomach stapling. Stomach stapling is when a doctor will staple the stomach to make it smaller, making it impossible to eat as much food as usual. In Kuwait, it has been reported that at least 5,000 patients have received the procedure in the last year. Stapling is so popular that it “prompted the country's first conference for medical professionals involved in weight loss surgery last year” (Verjee & Hume 1, 2012). Unfortunately, trying to address this problem is an extremely difficult process because of all the fast food places that are available in Kuwait and how rich Kuwaitis usually are. As stated in the Health System Profile of Kuwait, “Food is available in abundance and is affordable to all sections of the population” (Health System Profile 3, 2006).

Newly Proposed Method

The World Health Organization explains, “An estimated 1.5 billion adults and 43 million children under five years old were

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overweight in 2010 in Kuwait” (Awad & Waheedi 2, 2012). One method that has not already been attempted to resolve this problem is to start educating children at a young age about the dangers of obesity and all of the health problems they can cause. The need to educate kids about health needs to be stronger, maybe including longer gym

class periods as well.

Overall, obesity in Kuwait is a major public health problem and will continue to be an issue if not slowed down soon.

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