

Editorial

Obesity in the Arab Gulf Countries

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Thirty years ago the word obesity was not familiar to the people of the Arabian Gulf countries. Underweight, anaemia and infectious diseases were the predominant diseases at that time. However, the Arab Gulf countries, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have experienced marked changes in lifestyle, socioeconomic status and dietary habits during the past three decades. These changes have their impact on trends of diseases in the populations with development of non-communicable diseases, such as obesity, heart diseases, hypertension, diabetes and cancer.

The prevalence of obesity is rising steadily in the Arab gulf countries, with a higher prevalent among women than men. Studies in the region showed that overweight and obesity are growing rapidly among school children and adolescents. This is an alarming situation as increased body fat among children may be a contributing factor for obesity in adulthood. Furthermore, it is well documented that obesity is a risk factor for certain chronic diseases, especially heart diseases, hypertension, diabetes and some forms of cancer.

The trend of increasing prevalence of obesity in the Arab Gulf countries suggests that current measures to prevent and control obesity are inadequate. Programme to prevent obesity in any community should base on epidemiological studies in the region. This current issue of *Bahrain Medical Bulletin* provides useful information on obesity in the Arab Gulf countries. The issue was divided into four main sections: First section includes review papers on measuring on obesity, the role of physical activity and diet in childhood obesity and a review on obesity in Saudi Arabia. Second section includes three original papers on obesity in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar; whereas the third section contains five short communications on attitudes of nursing students to obesity, obesity in students of Bahrain University, obesity in females students in the United Arab Emirates University, obesity among health workers in Bahrain and obesity among women in the United Arab Emirates. The fourth section provides very useful bibliography on all published papers and reports on obesity in the Arab Gulf countries.

We hope that this special issue on obesity in the Arab Gulf countries is a useful document for all those interested in studying obesity in this region.

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