



Toronto Charter on Obesity & Mental Health

TORONTO, JUNE 27, 2012

{ Charter }

Background

1. Individuals with both obesity and mental illness experience bias and stigmatization.
2. People with enduring mental health problems are two to three times more likely to develop obesity and related disorders such as diabetes and heart disease than the general population.
3. Conversely, obesity can negatively affect mental health.
4. Shared societal, environmental and/or biological drivers are implicated in this frequent association of mental illness and obesity.
5. This frequent association has a large impact on the length and quality of peoples' lives and leads to enormous costs for society.

Call to Action

The organizers and attendees of the ***Hot Topic Conference on Obesity and Mental Health, Toronto, June 26–28, 2012*** declare and support this Charter and call on all stakeholders, including policy makers, health care professionals, service users and their families and caregivers, to join in the effort to reduce the negative consequences associated with obesity and mental illness by:

Enabling Change through Policy

1. Prevention of mental illness and weight-related disorders should be an important component of public health goals and measures.
2. Policies must recognize the links of both conditions to socioeconomic, cultural, gender and other determinants of health.
3. Public health policies and interventions must reflect the complex interplay between mental health and obesity without marginalizing and stigmatizing persons with obesity and/or mental illness.
4. Policy makers must ensure that individuals with mental health problems have equitable access to evidence-based obesity prevention and treatment. They should also ensure that individuals with obesity have equitable access to appropriate mental health services to address drivers and consequences of obesity.
5. Health systems need to ensure adequate capacity, infrastructure and program support, including education for health care professionals, caregivers, families and service users, to empower them to address these issues.
6. Policy makers should establish and ensure standards for responsible media coverage of obesity prevention and management and the promotion of healthy body image, including establishing standards for advertising and the promotion of weight loss practices.

The Role of Health Professionals

7. A cultural shift is needed to foster respect, understanding and a non-judgmental attitude towards individuals with mental health problems and/or obesity.
8. All health practitioners, particularly those involved in mental health care, must be trained and supported to recognize and address the bidirectional association between mental health and body weight and to prevent excessive weight gain, including that associated with the use of psychiatric medications.
9. All health practitioners, particularly those involved in weight management and its consequences, must monitor patients' mental health, as well potential unintended adverse consequences of weight interventions.
10. The primary care setting is ideally positioned to provide a holistic and family orientated approach to address these associated health problems.
11. All health professionals should collaborate across disciplines, services and sectors to ensure that the close links between obesity and mental health are recognized and addressed.

Expanding and Disseminating Knowledge

12. Greater investments must be made in research to understand the causes, consequences and costs of combined mental illness and obesity, and on the most effective ways to prevent and manage them.
13. Researchers must recognize and address the potential confounding role of mental illness in obesity research and of obesity in mental health research.
14. Existing knowledge on the links between mental health and obesity must be synthesized and developed into practical resources, accessible to the medical community, educators, patients, their families and other caregivers.

The **International Association for the Study of Obesity** (IASO) is a not-for-profit organization linking over 50 regional and national associations with over 10,000 professional members in scientific, medical and research organizations. It is an umbrella organization representing 56 countries. Over the last decade, IASO has established itself as a dynamic, professionally managed organization which has become a 'nerve centre' for everyone from governments, professionals and media, wanting the latest information on prevalence data and new developments in scientific research into the prevention and management of obesity.

Our mission statement: "To improve global health by promoting the understanding of obesity and weight-related diseases through scientific research and dialogue, whilst encouraging the development of effective policies for their prevention and management." To find out more, please visit our website: www.iaso.org

The **Canadian Obesity Network – Réseau canadien en obésité** (CON-RCO) is a broad network of over 8000 organizations and individuals from many sectors and disciplines who are committed to stemming the tide of obesity in Canada and to reducing the mental, physical and economic burden of obesity on Canadians. The mission of CON-RCO is to act as a catalyst for addressing obesity in Canada and to foster knowledge translation, capacity building, and partnerships among stakeholders so that researchers, health professionals, policy makers and other stakeholders may develop effective solutions to treat, and to prevent obesity. CON-RCO's three strategic goals are to: 1) Address the Social Stigma Associated with Obesity; 2) Change the Way Professionals Think about Obesity and Interact with Obese individuals; and 3) Improve Access to Obesity Prevention, Treatment and Management. Since 2006, CON-RCO has trained over 3,000 health professionals, students, policy makers and industry stakeholders on issues relevant to obesity prevention and management, launched two widely used literature alerting services, published an award-winning magazine (CONDUIT), organized Canada's only recurring scientific conference dedicated to obesity, and much more. CON-RCO is a non-profit organization hosted by the University of Alberta and Alberta Health Services in Edmonton, Alberta. Find out more at www.obesitynetwork.ca.

The **Centre for Addiction and Mental Health** (CAMH) is Canada's largest mental health and addiction teaching hospital, as well as one of the world's leading research centres in the area of addiction and mental health. CAMH combines clinical care, research, education, policy development, prevention and health promotion to transform the lives of people affected by mental health and addiction issues.

CAMH is fully affiliated with the University of Toronto, and is a Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization Collaborating Centre.

Founded 2005, CAMH'S mission is to:

- Encourage its members in the development of health policies consistent with CAMH'S value system of compassion, integrity and commitment and to engage in an advisory role and promote the adoption of such policies by the appropriate governments.
- Provide guidance and mentoring to all International Medical Graduates (IMGs) keen on entering the Canadian health-care system, and to support, advice, junior doctors in training, that are already in the system.
- To be the umbrella organization for all associations of Physicians of Indian Heritage in representing their interests consistent with CAMH'S vision.
- To provide networking opportunities to facilitate both professional and community growth.
- To facilitate engagement and community activities to provide assistance to the underprivileged and those in need.

Find out more at www.camh.ca.

This initiative was supported by an unrestricted educational grant from Lundbeck Canada, a subsidiary of H. Lundbeck A/S, an international research-based pharmaceutical company which focuses on diseases of the Central Nervous System. Its mission is to improve the quality of life for those suffering from psychiatric and neurological disorders.