Prevalence of obesity among university employees and their families in Saudi Arabia

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Background: Obesity is major public health issue in both developed and developing countries and is a key risk factor for many non-communicable diseases particularly cardiovascular diseases, diabetes mellitus, some types of cancer and osteoarthritis. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC; Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and United Arab Emirates) countries have one of the highest prevalence of overweight and obese adults ranging from 25-50% and 10-60% respectively. Saudi Arabia has the second highest prevalence of overweight (35%) and obesity (50%) after Kuwait. Using a cross sectional study design, the WHO Stepwise tools are utilized to collect data from 4500 university employees and their families over 18 years old during May 2013 to April 2014. Findings showed the prevalence of overweight and obesity among the study population was 33%, of which 36% respectively. The study population consisted Saudis (68%), Arab non-Saudi (24%) and South Asian (7%). Obesity was significantly higher among the females in Saudis (p=0.001) and Arab non- Saudi groups (P= 0.006), while no significant gender differences observed in South Asian group. In all groups the pattern of obesity increased with age. The obese population in all groups had higher prevalence of cardiovascular risk factors than normal. For example the obese Saudis population had 2.1 folds hypertension (odds ratio 2.1 95% CI=1.80-2.42, P=<0.001), 1.5 fold diabetes (odds ratio 1.5 95% CI=1.25-1.69, P=<0.001) and 3 fold hypercholesterolemia (odds ratio 3.1 95% CI=2.69-3.60, P=<0.001) than normal. Such high prevalence of overweight and obesity among the university their family requires an urgent action from the university administration in establishing preventive programme including diet and physical activity interventions.

Biography
Alzeidan R A is a PhD student in Birmingham City University (BCU)-UK, has a master degree in healthcare management and BSc in pharmacy. She is working as clinical researcher in King Saud University- College of Medicine-Department of Cardiology. She has published several peer-reviewed papers and she presented her research projects in regional, national and international conferences.

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