High meat high protein diet: Problems of weight gain and obesity

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Of the 22 industrialized countries in the world, the US has the highest obesity statistics and rising. According to the National Institute of Health, nearly 30% of Americans are obese and rising and two thirds of Americans are overweight. To combat obesity, on one hand the researchers are trying to understand and isolate the genetic strains that are associated with obesity and on the other hand the social scientists are trying to understand the behavioral aspects of poor eating habits and lack of physical activities that is contributing to obesity. This paper adds to the behavioral research stream by examining the impact of the changing American diet favoring higher meat consumption on obesity. According to the USDA Americans are consuming 8.5 ounces of meat per day against the recommended amount of 3-4 ounces per day. The paper uses a triangulated approach by using both laboratory tests and a field survey of 537 people in four US Midwestern towns to collect data. Analysis of the data supports the notion that higher portion of meat consumption in daily diet is associated with obesity. The survey results also show that the consumption habits are formed at early ages that become hard to change later in life. Overwhelmingly, the respondents felt that proper knowledge and exposure to healthy eating should be made available during formative years. These results have important policy implications towards dissemination of proper dietary knowledge, school feeding programs, and food subsidies programs in the US to help control obesity.

Biography
Pearl Sawhney is a senior at Grinnell College, Iowa, where she is pursuing a degree in Biochemistry, with a concentration in Global Development Studies. She has won numerous science awards in Iowa and has been a Research Scholar with USDA in 2014. She also has two conference presentations.

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