

19TH WORLD OBESITY CONGRESS

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On the prevention of obesity and a philosophy for healthy living; The Aruba project

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Obesity as a disease has reached historical, maximal peak values, with nearly one-third of the world's population suffering from obesity and obesity-related conditions. We are now witnessing the impact of this epidemic upon the global health status, with non-communicable diseases on the rise. We have also witnessed the shortcomings and failures of past actions taken when obesity is already present. In Aruba, a prevalence of 36% of childhood obesity was found in 2005, with a tendency to increase as compared to the data prior to 2000. Actions to improve healthy eating habits, reduce sedentary lifestyle and enable a social environment to prevent obesity were carried out in a systematic plan in the period from 2009-2013 and a positive change was observed in the incidence of obesity compatible with complete deceleration of the epidemic and improvement in health indicators. Through the lessons learned from the project as executed in Aruba, we demonstrate how a specific road map can be developed, implemented and highly successful in addressing the obesity epidemic. The roadmap includes the following steps: A population base-line study, an awareness campaign, an approved action plan by the stakeholders and government, changes in infrastructure, the creation of an institute to promote a healthy lifestyle, an introduction to the exercise is medicine initiative and a study of progress with ongoing monitoring.

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