

Obesity is on the rise worldwide. Its associations with gender, age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status are complex in the United States (Wang & Beydoun, *Epidemiologic Reviews* 2007). Mississippi has the highest prevalence of type 2 diabetes in the U.S. Given that approximately 65% of Mississippians are overweight and mostly lacking physical activity/exercise, there is probably also a large population with prediabetes. AACE's and ACE's Power of Prevention Program (POP) is of great help in this regard. The teaching material of POP including information on nutrition, lifestyle and reasons why people should change their behavior can easily be utilized by medical personnel including nurse practitioners, dietitians, and certified diabetes educators (CDEs). The endocrinologist's role when first encountering an obese individual is also very important. He or she needs to attempt to greatly impact the patient pointing out the detrimental consequences of NOT changing behavior in nutrition, lifestyle, and glycemic control.

The Diabetes Foundation of Mississippi (DFM) is working to increase awareness of diabetes as a serious health problem in high-risk populations throughout the state with the Power of Prevention. It partners with health ministers at African American churches to participate in health fairs, conduct blood glucose screenings and provide information on type 2 diabetes prevention and diabetes self-management. Counseling and information on healthy nutrition and the importance of activity in preventing diabetes as well as managing diabetes is available to health care participants. The DFM will host a training session for health ministers in an effort to empower the health ministers to assist their church members with diabetes to reach behavioral change goals and improve their outcomes and quality of life. The DFM also works with private and public schools throughout Mississippi to teach students and teachers the importance of simple lifestyle changes. These changes are directed to reduce the risk for developing diabetes, and utilizing the great material and slides from Power of Prevention. DFM staff also gives presentations to high school health classes to reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Considering that a healthy workplace is associated with lower healthcare costs and increased productivity, the DFM also partners with corporations to provide health fairs and screenings for employees, counseling and information on diabetes management and diabetes prevention. "Lunch and Learn" is an informal employee diabetes educational program using Power of Prevention materials to increase awareness and provide an on the job question and answer session on diabetes management and prevention. As recently reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (Barabási A-L, *New England Journal of Medicine* July 26, 2007), it is very important to involve not only one individual at risk for becoming diabetic but the individual's whole family. Future plans of the DFM include a healthy lifestyle program at Head Start Centers to get the entire family involved in adopting healthy eating habits, increasing physical activity and ultimately diabetes prevention. I wish to give special thanks to Irena M. McClain, MPH, Associate Director of the DFM; Mary D. Fortune, Executive Vice President of the DFM; Doyle Warrington, Chairman of the DFM Board; Rick Carlton, MD, President of the DFM; Herman Taylor, MD, George Moll, MD, PhD and Warren Jones, MD, DFM, as well as Dr. M. Bouldin and his team, Delta Health Alliance Diabetes Program in Mississippi, for their continuing

efforts to improve the lives of many Mississippians. Utilizing the POP initiative, I think we all are well equipped to tackle the epidemic of obesity and type 2 diabetes by utilizing the Power of Prevention initiative. Help us spread the word!

References

1. Wang Y & Beydoun MA. The obesity epidemic in the United States – Gender, Age, Socioeconomic, Racial/Ethnic, and Geographic Characteristics: a systematic review and meta-regression analysis. *Epidemiologic Reviews* 2007; 1-23
2. Barabási A-L, “Network Medicine – From Obesity to the “Diseasome”. *N Engl J Med* 357:404, July 26, 2007.

Christian A. Koch, MD, PhD, FACP, FACE
Professor and Director
Division of Endocrinology
University of Mississippi Medical Center
Jackson, MS 39216