

Issue of obesity in the US



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Abstract

Healthy living is always the dream of every American. However, not all the citizens in the US have the chance of enjoying healthy living because some of them are obese. It is evident the sudden changes in lifestyle and the gradual decline in the number of hours of engaging in physical activities is alluded to the rise in obese cases in the United States. Primarily, obesity in the US is now a major health concern not only for the populace, but also for the US government as a whole. The health concern of the people has a direct influence on the performance and development of the economy of the country. Obesity has close connection to the rise of lifestyle diseases such as coronary artery diseases, type 2 diabetes, cancer and stroke among other complications. The condition also has enormous implications on the economic cost and the mortality rates witnessed in the various states in America. It is evident that rise in various complications caused by obesity has given rise to numerous opportunistic diseases, increased unproductivity at the workplace and rise in mortality rates. While other developed and industrialized countries across the globe have reported cases of obesity, the United States remains the leading. The most raging challenge faced by obese individuals is the cost implications. On average an obese person in the US spends an average of \$1, 429 more in terms of medical expenses in the country every year. The country has equally suffered an increased medical expenditure because of the increase in the number of obese individuals in the country. Approximately \$147 billion is spend within the United States to cater for medical expenses to obese individuals. It is for this reason that this

paper delves into analyzing the cause and the ramifications of increased cases of obesity in the country.

Obesity is usually defined by the Body Mass Index (BMI) which is determined by calculating the weight of a person in kilograms by the square of the height in meters. Primarily, a BMI of more than 29.9 kg/m^2 indicates that an individual is overweight. On the other hand, if the BMI of a person is more than 30.0 kg/m^2 , then the person is considered obese (Cynthia J. Stein, 2004). There are also extreme cases where individuals may record a BMI of over 40.0 kg/m^2 . This is considered a stage three obesity and is sometimes referred to as morbid obesity. There is however, a limitation in the use of BMI to reveal obesity. It is not a perfect measurement because it does not distinguish between lean mass from fat mass. Additionally, it does not count for racial and ethnic differences. It is for this reason that other factors such as the circumference of the waist alongside the neck circumference may be used instead of the MBI. Overall fitness and lifestyle habits are also other important elements that are considered when analyzing the obesity of an individual (Christoph Trattner, 2017). For children, the measure of obesity is different. It is measured as an age- and sex specific percentile of the BMI. For example, in children between the ages of 2 and 19 years, a BMI of 85th, but more than 95th reveal overweight. A BMI of over 95th indicates that the person is obese and therefore require quick intervention before other medical conditions such as coronary heart diseases, high blood pressure begin to set in.

According to the 2012 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) survey, it is evident that on an average of 35% of the Americans adults are obese. As of the year 2013, another research from the CDC revealed that the northern part of the US had a prevalence of less than 20%. This is alarming considering that the national goal stands at 15%. This shows that the Americans has on average doubled the requirement (Michael R. Kramer, 2016). It is also important to note that the states such as California, Colorado, and Hawaii recorded the least number of obese individuals with their average being 20-25%. On the other hand, the greatest rates have been witnessed in the states such as Mississippi and West Virginia. In terms of regional analysis, the southern region had the highest rates at 30.2%, while the northern recorded the lowest at 24.9% (Christoph Trattner, 2017). It is for this reason that it is not only considered a girth control problem, but rather a chronic disease as described by the American Medical Association. It has also been considered a national epidemic by the Centers for Diseases control and prevention (CDC) it is not only a girth issue but also a serious problem that can affect the physical, metabolic and psychological health.

Fundamentally, there are many narratives pertaining the cause of obesity in the US. First, there is a close association between genetics and obesity. It is evident that children of obese parents are much more likely to develop obesity than the children of lean parents. In this regard, obese parents must ensure that they introduce better lifestyle and weight management mechanisms to their children before they develop the condition. However, it should be noted that obesity is not predetermined because of the genetics. In fact, the eating habits and the type of foods eaten by an individual largely

has a greater impact on the behavior of genes (Harvard Health Publishing, 2012). Secondly, the leading cause of obesity among the Americans is the rising use of engineered junk foods. It has been observed that highly engineered foods are usually tastier and appealing to the people. Therefore, their good taste and presentation is appealing to the eye and therefore this drives many people into eating more. Additionally, the many sugared and high fat junk food have an addiction. In this case, they stimulate the reward centers within the brain and therefore the urge to take them more and more develop as one gets used to them. It is for this reason that this junk foods are usually comparable to addictive drinks such as alcohol, nicotine and cocaine all of which have an addiction. Lastly it is evident that the rising cases of obese prevalence especially among children in the United States has been prompted by aggressive marketing. It is evident that many companies are using enticing and appealing promotional campaigns to get their junk foods sold. When children come across, they easily fall for them. The long use of such foods easily drives these children into obesity.

The impact obesity in the United States has taken toll on the health cost of the country. It is estimated that close to \$147 billion and \$ 210 billion is spent in direct and indirect cost of medication for the citizens who are obese respectively (Gonzalez, 2019). This condition has also had an adverse effect on the workplace. Today, decreased productivity has been witnessed in the workplace because of increased absenteeism due to overweight.

Additionally, this condition has a huge economic burden on the society as a whole. It has also been established that the greater an individual's BMI, the higher the chances of sick days and medical claims. There is a precedence

that if the number of obesities continue to go up, the healthcare cost associated with treatment and management of the disease can rise from the current \$48 Billion to \$66 Billion by 2030 (Christoph Trattner, 2017). The ripple effects associated with obesity is not only the monetary implication, but also the increased early mortality rates that are likely to be witnessed in the near future with the increase in the number of cases of obesity. It is also evident that there is a close connection between increased susceptibility of individuals to other medical conditions such as coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and cancer all of which are more addictive.

Despite the high prevalence of obese cases in the United States. There is also a light at the end of the tunnel. The best ways to control the rising number of obese individuals is to encourage the citizens to engage in the following activities. First, they should engage in physical activities regularly. It is evident that one is required to get about 150-300 minutes of moderate intensity activity every week to avoid weight gain (Gonzalez, 2019).

Additionally, it is good to develop a healthy eating plan. The citizens should avoid the junk and fat foods that predisposes them to developing obesity in the long run. Secondly, due to the aggressive marketing that is common among the food companies in the US, it is good for the children to be kept away from such marketing campaigns to prevent them from getting attracted to them. The children are the most susceptible and therefore need to avoid such aggressive marketing campaigns. Thirdly, it is advisable that the citizens should develop a regular monitoring evaluation of their weight to be able to manage weight gain. If they find that they are rapidly gaining weight, they can address the habit before they become obese (Gonzalez, 2019).

Conclusion

In summary, it is evident that the United States has the highest prevalence of obese cases compared to the rest of the world. This is due to the fact that there is reduced physical activities, high intake of junk foods, lack of regular monitoring and evaluation of weight among other factors. Of course, this has taken a toll on their economic situations and that of the country as a whole. It is therefore, important to consider avoiding the aggravating factors of obesity and be able to reduce the high number of obese citizens in the country. The citizens should also develop good feeding habits and lifestyle change to reduce the prevalence of obesity in the country.

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