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Obesity – Global Trends

Obesity is traditionally known as the disease of the West and high-income countries. However, as the Western culture spreads its influence globally, many middle- and low-income countries are beginning to see western food in their neighborhoods and have similarly started to experience the same negative health outcomes within the past 30 years. The world health organization cites that in the past 30 years, the obesity rate has nearly tripled in both men and women globally.¹ The financial impact of treating obesity globally is substantial, especially for a disease that is preventable. The Lacet cites that in 2017, the economic cost of obesity as it relates to healthcare costs and lost productivity represents 2.8% of the global GDP which translates to \$2 trillion annually.²

Obesity is a metabolic disease that has many comorbidities such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and certain cancers. The primary driver of obesity is chronic excess sugar intakes found in processed foods leading to dysregulated insulin function and increased fat storage.¹ I rank obesity as critical because it is a disease that was fabricated on the basis of profit and greed by the unregulated food and medical systems that are supposed to serve us but instead choose profit over the well-being of the population.

To ameliorate obesity on a global scale, a multi-pronged approach is required to form policies that better regulate the food supply and the extent to which foods can be processed, as well as increased accessibility to healthier foods and nutrition education in schools to improve health literacy. The likelihood of this happening is low because of the profit that is gained from the monopoly that is the food industry that benefit from populations being addicted to their sugary, affordable food, and the pharmaceutical industry profiting off of the chronically ill patients. A 2020 report showed that profits made off of obesity medications were approximately \$1.6 billion and is projected to increase as obesity rates increase and new medications are developed.³

References

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