

Editorial

Appropriate Asian body mass indices?

This issue of *Obesity Reviews* is the outcome of a preliminary meeting organized in Hong Kong, in 1999, in conjunction with the World Health Organization (WHO), The International Association for the Study of Obesity and the International Obesity TaskForce. This meeting considered the appropriateness of the classification of obesity in Asians at the WHO Expert Technical Consultation for Obesity held in Geneva in June 1997 (1). The Hong Kong meeting led to the proposal that adult overweight could be specified in Asia when the body mass index (BMI) exceeded 23.0 and that obesity should be specified when the BMI exceeded 25.0 (2). At that stage there was only a modest amount of evidence on obesity and the high rates of comorbidities in Asians published in the English literature. Chinese scientists have since undertaken meta-analyses on BMI and its disease risks, and a proposal for BMI cut-offs for overweight and obesity specifically for Chinese adults has been made. These analyses will be published in English in the near future. This issue of *Obesity Reviews* therefore presents new analyses of data from China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Singapore to allow comparisons with Western literature. During the final phase of producing this issue, Professor Julian Critchley, who

contributed greatly to the original Hong Kong meeting, was tragically killed; we trust that this supplement will go some way to meeting his demands for a rigorous scientific approach to medical innovations. We are grateful to the Roche Company for an educational grant to some of the authors and support for meetings to discuss this project.

Prof. W. P. T. James
International Obesity TaskForce, London, UK
Prof. Chen Chunming
Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine, Beijing, China
Prof. Shuji Inoue
Kyoritsu Women's University, Tokyo, Japan

References

- 1 World Health Organization. *Obesity: Preventing and Managing the Global Epidemic*. WHO Obesity Technical Report Series no. 894. ISBN no.: 92 4 120894 5. WHO: Geneva, 2000.
- 2 WHO/IASO/IOTF. *The Asia-Pacific Perspective: Redefining Obesity and its Treatment*. Health Communications Australia Pty Ltd, 2000. (Full document available from: http://www.idi.org.au/obesity_report.htm)