

University of Melbourne Obesity

Wednesday 20 May 2009
Report by Naomi Crafti

Recently I had the pleasure to attend The University of Melbourne Obesity Consortium official launch. EDFV is a member organisation of the Consortium.

Recent publicity has made us all aware of the rise in the prevalence of obesity in Australia. The AusDiab study found that over 52% of women and 67% of men are either overweight or obese. The number of obese children and adolescents has doubled in the last 15 years. The University of Melbourne Obesity Consortium has been set up as a response to this serious health issue.

The University of Melbourne Obesity Consortium is a large multifaceted group comprising over 80 members from approximately 40 groups. The groups have expertise that ranges from Public Health, Child and Adolescent Health, Clinical Medicine to, Obesity Clinics that include integrated Medical and Surgical units, Clinical Research departments, Basic Science, Economists etc, who are all currently addressing the obesity problem from the social, environmental and medical perspectives. The Eating Disorder Foundation of Victoria represents a mental health perspective on this issue.

The University of Melbourne's Pro Vice-Chancellor, Professor Susan Elliott, (Teaching, Learning & Equity) chaired the launch proceedings.

Professor Joe Proietto, Director of the Obesity Consortium gave an overview of the groups depth, breadth, goals and future directions.

Minister Maxine Morand (Children & Early Childhood Development and Women's Affairs) provided an overview of the Victorian Government's response and initiatives in relation to what is now known as the 'obesity epidemic'.

Following the launch a scientific meeting, featuring the most up to date research in the areas of obesity prevention, intervention and endocrinology was held. The meeting stressed the limitations of current treatment approaches and the need to focus on prevention at both an environmental and epigenetic level.

The day ended with a public lecture and panel discussion on the topic of 'Challenges facing the prevention and treatment of obesity'. I represented EDFV on this panel and enjoyed counterbalancing the bariatric surgeons with an emphasis on 'health at any weight'.