

## **Causes and prevention of obesity: Is there the courage for change?**

Obesity rates around the world are influenced profoundly by the food and physical activity environment. Default food conditions are important determinants of both behavior and health status and have become toxic enough to virtually guarantee high rates of obesity, even in developing countries. Examples of negative influences are large portion sizes; too little access to healthy foods and too much access to calorie-dense, nutrient poor options; relentless marketing of junk food, particularly to children; and distorted food economics, driven in part by government policies, that make better foods more expensive. This talk will discuss the concept of changing defaults and will cover the rationale and support for policy changes that might help create significant advances in preventing obesity. Controversial proposals such as taxing sugar-sweetened beverages and restricting food marketing will be used as key examples. In creating policy change it is important to identify change agents, to understand how proposals can best be framed, and to understand the realities of local, national, and international politics. Psychologists have key roles to play as researchers, practitioners, and advocates.