Abstract Title: The Aruba Project, a road map for population approach to combating obesity

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Abstract

Obesity as a disease has reached historical, maximal peak values, with nearly one-third of the world's population suffering from obesity and obesity-related conditions. We are now witnessing the impact of this epidemic upon the global health status, with non-communicable diseases on the rise. We have also witnessed the shortcomings and failures of past actions taken when obesity is already present. In Aruba, a prevalence of 36% of childhood obesity was found in 2005, with a tendency to increase as compared to the data prior to 2000. Actions to improve heathy eating habits, reduce sedentary lifestyle and enable a social environment to prevent obesity were carried out in a systematic plan in the period from 2009 – 2013 and a positive change was observed in the incidence of obesity compatible with complete deceleration of the epidemic and improvement in health indicators. Through the lessons learned from the project as executed in Aruba, we demonstrate how a specific road map can be developed, implemented and highly successful in addressing the obesity epidemic. The roadmap includes the following steps: a population al basis- line study, an awareness campaign, an approved action plan by the stakeholders and Government, changes in infrastructure, the creation of an institute to promote a healthy lifestyle, an introduction to the Exercise is Medicine initiative, and a study of progress with ongoing monitoring.

Keywords— *Exercise is Medicine, Lifestyle, Obesity, Prevention*

Professional Biography

During his distinguished career, Richard W. M. Visser DC, Ph.D. has focused on the pandemic of childhood obesity among various populations, working in consultation with other international experts. He studied the problem and implemented solutions from many perspectives: as a clinical researcher, academic and educator, activist and politician, entrepreneur, concerned citizen and parent. His work has made vital contributions to a greater understanding of the biological, sociological, and psychological factors surrounding childhood obesity. Early in 2008, he was appointed by the Government of Aruba to head the Obesity Task Force, and a year later, he began his four- year term 2009-2013 as Minister of Health, and Sport for Aruba..
Today Dr. Visser continues his innovative approach as CEO of VERA Health and Education..



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Any Comments: In collaboration with The Collage of Sports Medicine, we have produced a book "The Aruba Project" Clearly outlining the shift that occurred in Aruba from 2008-2014. Developing a work book and roadmap for institutions organizations and countries - implementing actions, measuring and monitoring outcomes Book will be released in March 2018