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COMMUNITY HEALTH: *Obesity a Health Issue and Social Determinants*

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Most obesity related illnesses and chronic diseases are preventable (CDC, 2008). Yet, over 150 billion dollars is spent annually treating these problems in the United State (Health, NY 2011). The World Health Organization now considers obesity to be a world-wide epidemic (WHO, 2009). Over the past four decades, obesity has increased over 300%, and leaving generations of obese adults teaching their children the same high risk behaviors (RWJF, 2011). Ethnic and socioeconomic disparities for healthy food and environments to live-in have lead the way for inequities in communities (RWJF, 2011). These inequities have continued to grow, resulting in a rise in environmental and behavioral risks, leading to higher incidents of obesity, increasing the frequencies of diabetes, asthma, cardiovascular disease and cancer among children and adolescents (Adamson & UNICEF, 2010). Childhood and adolescent health care costs have risen 70% over the last 15 years as obesity has risen 200% among children 5 to 17 years old (Trasande, et al, 2009). Among Hispanic and African American children these incident of obesity are two to three time higher (Trasande, et al, 2009).

The problem of obesity will not be solved or fix in the short term. It requires a population to change its behavior, starting with parents. Parents have the greatest influence on children during their early years of life (Koehly & Loscalzo, 2009). Social determinants have impacted obesity for lower socio-economic families, ethnic groups, and genders (RWJF, 2011). The inequities must be addressed in the interventions that focus on nutrition and healthy food. The health systems in Canada has a body of evidence that shows when the population doesn't have food insecurities, has a healthy food supply, and sufficient nutritional education, they are healthier, less obese, and fewer incidents of chronic illnesses and diseases (PHAC, 2006). The commitment to preventing and reducing obesity may start with the family, but needs the commitment of the community. As a parent who is actively involved in the community, I have witnessed children and adolescents loss of esteem, self-worth, suicides, and negative impact on the family. Additional, I have experience the successes these children have had when obesity interventions work. The community is healthier.

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