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Obesity costs global economy \$2 trillion: Study

21/11/2014



The report by the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) noted obesity is a critical global issue that requires a comprehensive, international intervention strategy.

More than 2.1 billion people - nearly 30 per cent of the global population - are overweight or obese. That is almost two and a half times the number of adults and children who are undernourished, the report said.

Obesity is responsible for about 5 per cent of all deaths a year worldwide, and its global economic impact amounts to roughly \$2 trillion annually, the report said.

"And the problem - which is preventable - is rapidly getting worse. If the prevalence of obesity continues on its current trajectory, almost half of the world's adult population will be overweight or obese by 2030," researchers said.

The report stated that global discord surrounding how to move forward underscores the need for integrated assessments of potential solutions. Lack of progress on these fronts is obstructing efforts to address rising rates of obesity.

The report seeks to overcome these hurdles by offering an independent view on the components of a potential strategy.

MGI studied 74 interventions (in 18 areas) that are being discussed or piloted somewhere around the world to address obesity, including subsidised school meals for all, calorie and

nutrition labelling, restrictions on advertising high-calorie food and drinks, and public-health campaigns.

"We found sufficient data on 44 of these interventions, in 16 areas. Although the research offers an initial economic analysis of obesity, our analysis is by no means complete. Rather, we see our work on a potential programme to address obesity as the equivalent of the maps used by 16th-century navigators," said researchers.

The report said existing evidence indicates that no single intervention is likely to have a significant overall impact. A systemic, sustained portfolio of initiatives, delivered at scale, is needed to reverse the health burden.

Education and personal responsibility are critical elements of any programme aiming to reduce obesity, but they are not sufficient on their own, the report said.

Other required interventions, according to the report, rely less on conscious choices by individuals and more on changes to the environment and societal norms.

Investigators said no individual sector in society can address obesity on its own - not governments, retailers, consumer-goods companies, restaurants, employers, media organisations, educators, health-care providers, or individuals.

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