

## Editorial

Children are vital for the future strength and success of our society. Healthy children will become healthy adults. This volume focuses on different heterogeneous aspects of Children's health, but in particular obesity. After the war against smoking and alcohol the developed world has declared another battle against the obesity outbreak, an epidemic that starts in the paediatric age. In developed countries obesity is a disease more commonly found with in less affluent areas, where high calorie and low cost food is easily available; in developing countries, malnutrition is wide spread within the poorer communities, whereas obesity is common place amongst the richer areas.

More than 50% of Europeans are currently over weight, 30% are obese and exposed to significantly increased risks of cardiovascular disease, hypertension and type 2 diabetes.

The phenomenon begins in the paediatric age, where individuals, together with the society that surrounds them, define their lifestyle. Moreover obesity is already a metabolic disease even in the younger ages when it correlates to insulin resistance, hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, an epiphysiolysis, apnoeas in sleep etc. in Italy 20,9% of children are overweight, 9,8% are obese.

The aim of our society has always been to search for prosperity, however humans are not always capable of self-control; this search therefore requires a stronger governancy, and educational strategy.

It seems natural then that this war should be fought, on a daily basis in all ambulatories and by all paediatricians with more serious commitment. Prevention is the only approach combined with a good cost-benefit ratio.

In Italy the health service is provided with family paediatricians. Obese and over weight children are easily recognized, without the need of scales. There is no requirement for screening, only for a change in our culture and nutritional education. An excess of weight at 4 years of age is, after parent's obesity, the most important risk factor leading to obesity in the adolescent and adult age. Moreover life-style and feeding regimens are important causes for the development of obesity. Therefore the fight against obesity is (also) a battle for the individual child and their family with a need for a more patient, difficult and dedicated leadership as changing the alimentary habits and lifestyle of an entire family is far more complicated and challenging than prescribing medication.

Obesity has been a theme in pediatric literature for over forty years (at least), however the number of obese children is still rising, and the urgency for true commitment is still not perceived in paediatricians (in individual pediatricians, or in pediatric associations). We need to start to work in advance, before obesity manifests itself (and of course even after, with a professionalism that lacks so far). A therapeutic attitude towards obesity must be accompanied by the organization of preventive socio-cultural strategies. Education and medicine need to work hand in hand to win this war.

A challenge and an invitation for each pediatrician.

**Prof. Dr. Gian Vincenzo Zuccotti**

*Editor-in-Chief*

*International Journal of Pediatrics and Child Health,  
University of Milan, Sacco Hospital, Milan*