

Research on obesity – time to think about the next agendas

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to highlight a fundamental gap in the economic research on obesity - the demand for unnecessary weight gain preventive goods. Such research is important as it will provide understanding of people's preventive behaviours and for that matter inform policies and practices with regards to influencing people's uptake of obesity preventive goods.

Materials and methods: Using MeSH and PICO approaches, a search strategy was developed to search for relevant articles in a number of academic and scientific journal repositories including PubMed Central, EconLit, Medline, Medscape and relevant (economic) journals' archives. The search strategy combined terms/phrases to look for publications.

Results: A total of 1351 potentially relevant articles (titles and abstracts) were reviewed. No publications could be found that concerned people's preventive behaviours in terms of demand with respect to obesity preventive goods. Only one

article which was not specific to obesity looked into people's preventive behaviours using an economic model.

Conclusions: Despite the huge economic and health burden of obesity, participations in activities deemed supportive to weight gain prevention are dismal. It must not therefore be assumed that there will be demand for all effective weight preventive goods/services. As a result of the complex nature of the condition, the demand for obesity preventive goods requires understanding of the complex factors which influence individual decisions. The behavioural economic perspective could help to increase understanding of the preferences of people as it examines how decisions are made by individuals in complex socio-economic and socio-cultural circumstances and financial constraints involving trade-offs.

Key words: Obesity, overweight, demand, economics, prevention, preventive goods.
