

*Multi-level determinants of obesity
in the Asia-Pacific region:
Food system governance, social policy
and consumer preferences*

Public Talk

10.00 am – 11.00 am, Tuesday, 18 March 2014

**Venue: UNU-IIGH Building, UKM Medical Centre, Jalan Yaacob
Latiff, Bandar Tun Razak, Cheras, 56000 Kuala Lumpur**

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Abstract

While levels of obesity are rising across the Asia-Pacific region, this presentation argues that country specific policies, level of economic development, cultural histories and desired standards of living undermine the efficacy of regional obesity prevention plans. Such plans are necessary as they provide basic principles to guide healthy eating and activity interventions and monitoring, but they are not sufficient. National and sub-population policy actions need to be tailored to local economic, cultural and governance conditions. This argument is illustrated through empirical studies conducted in Australia, the Cook Islands, Thailand and Japan. Together they indicate the limitations of leaving obesity prevention to regional agreements and the field of traditional public health. They point to the need for commitments by those in charge of social protection and labour market policies and urban, retail and transport planning, as well as involvement by, and regulation of, cultural custodians and intermediaries who promote particular dietary and physical activity practices. In short, an ecological public health response is required which is on the one hand trans-border, and on the other highly embedded in local conditions.

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Jane is a Senior Fellow at the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Australian National University. For 13 years, she has conducted research at the intersection of sociology and public health, with a focus on the cultural, social and health impacts of food system transformations. In this time she has authored and edited 6 books, and contributed to 35 book chapters and 50 peer review articles. She is an Associate Fellow of the Food Policy Centre, City University, London and Visiting Fellow, Leverhulme Centre for Integrative Research on Agriculture and Health, London. She sits on the Editorial Board of World Food Policy, auspiced by the Royal Thai Institute.

Her fieldwork takes place mainly in Australia and Thailand. In more applied research, she has recently been an advisor on food systems and health to the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office and the International Union of Health Promotion and Education.



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