**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.