



## In this issue

Much has been said and written about the public health challenge that obesity presents to the global community. It is clearly a complicated and multi-faceted issue requiring significant action and attention by governments and the numerous other stakeholders within communities. One of the major barriers impeding the development and implementation of successful policy interventions to address obesity is the apparent lack of consensus among key stakeholders about the role of government intervention through policy (often because of competing or vested interests), making decisive political action difficult. In this issue, Gonzalez-Zapata *et al.*<sup>(1)</sup> report on an important study in Europe exploring policy options that public health specialists and other stakeholders consider most appropriate for combating obesity. This study demonstrates there is support for a core package of policy options, but suggests that a lack of support for more direct interventions such as taxation make this instrument of government difficult to implement in the EU context.

The socio-cultural environment in which we live plays a significant role in influencing our behaviour. It is often heard that modern life brings with it a range of pressures that make it difficult to be healthy, particularly eating well and being physically active. Welch *et al.*<sup>(2)</sup> explore the perception of time pressure as a barrier to healthy eating and physical activity among women in Australia. Using a cross-sectional survey of food intake, physical activity and

perceived causes of time pressure in a random sample of over 1500 women, they have described the relationships between time pressure perceptions and diet and physical activity behaviours. Their findings suggest that addressing this perception of time poverty may be needed in order to support greater involvement in healthy eating and physical activity behaviours.

Rather than expensive media campaigns to promote fruit and vegetable consumption, maybe we need to encourage people to turn off the television and get away from the Internet. This will give back a few hours of time each day, reduce the effect of advertising on our consumer behaviour, and make redundant the need to make tough policy decisions to address obesity. If only it was that simple.

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### References

1. González-Zapata LI, Alvarez-Dardet C, Ortiz-Moncada R *et al.* (2009) Policy options for obesity in Europe: a comparison of public health specialists with other stakeholders. *Public Health Nutr* **12**, 896–908.
2. Welch N, McNaughton SA, Hunter W, Hume C & Crawford D (2009) Is the perception of time pressure a barrier to healthy eating and physical activity among women? *Public Health Nutr* **12**, 888–895.