

**19th April 2006  
SUBMISSION**

To the Health Committee on the Inquiry into Obesity and Type Two Diabetes in New Zealand

**Who are we and what do we do**

This submission is from Carmel Gregan-Ford, National Education Manager, on behalf of the New Zealand Kidney Foundation, PO Box 139 Christchurch.

The New Zealand Kidney Foundation is a not for profit incorporated society relying on contributions from public support. WE are the largest organization representing New Zealanders with Kidney Disease. Our role includes funding research into the prevention early detection and cure of kidney disease, promoting the detection and early intervention of kidney diseases and promotion of kidney donations for transplantation and promoting the interests of people with kidney disease.

We are making this submission as we are concerned about the rising incidence of obesity and type 2 diabetes affecting the health and well being of New Zealanders, with particular concern as to the impact this has on the incidence of Kidney Disease in this country.

**Kidney Disease in New Zealand**

In developed countries, such as New Zealand, nearly half of the new cases of kidney failure requiring renal replacement therapy are attributable to diabetes. This proportion is expected to rise even further because of the rapidly increasing incidence of diabetes.

- Currently there are 3563 patients with End Stage Kidney Disease in New Zealand receiving some form of Renal Replacement Therapy. (This is either Dialysis or a Kidney Transplant). Without renal replacement therapy these patients die within days or weeks.
- 43% of all patients requiring renal replacement therapy are as a result of diabetic nephropathy with Maori and Pacific people 3.5 times more likely to have kidney failure
- The cost of dialysis is estimated to cost \$50,000 per patient per annum with transplant costs being lower depending on the longevity of the graft. Currently it is estimated it costs \$80 million to treat Kidney Disease in New Zealand annually.
- It is estimated that currently there are more than 268,000 adults with significant renal impairment in New Zealand; this is a conservative figure with the majority of these as a result of Type 2 diabetes.
- It is already predicted that the numbers of people suffering from End Stage Renal Disease will double in 10 years, however we feel this is a conservative figure with at least another 40,000 either with some form of kidney disease or likely to suffer kidney disease as a result of being diabetic or obese.

With this overwhelming number of potential end stage renal failure patients requiring renal replacement therapy we believe urgent and effective action must be undertaken before the already stretched renal services in New Zealand are totally overwhelmed in terms of capacity and financial resources.

### **Development of Type 2 Diabetes**

The western lifestyle has contributed significantly to the huge increase in type 2 diabetes prevalence. Obesity, physical inactivity, smoking and alcohol consumption have been linked with the disease. This was clearly demonstrated by data from a study examining the prevalence of diabetes among Australian Aborigines (1). O'Dea found that when overweight, diabetic Aborigines were switched from an urbanized western diet to a more traditional hunter gatherer diet; metabolic abnormalities were either greatly improved or completely normalized.

The New Zealand Kidney Foundation believes prevention is the key both to alleviate human suffering and to get the biggest gain from health-care expenditure. Much of the prevention activity lies in self care and good education of both professionals and the general public.

Preventable diabetes related hospital stays are costing the taxpayer in excess of \$500 million a year. Many of these admissions are for diabetes related complications including kidney failure. In about 30% of cases where diabetes has been diagnosed, irreversible complications have already occurred.

### **A New Zealand Kidney Foundation Health Initiative**

The New Zealand Kidney Foundation launched its National Drink Water Week in March 20th 2006. Our concern with the rise in obesity particularly among children was a key factor in our decision to target all schools throughout New Zealand.

Resource Kits containing posters, word finds, water related activities and information about water were sent. Letters to the Principals and Canteen Managers were also included asking them to go "Water only" for the week, explaining the reason for this health initiative. (See attached letters)

The aim of this week was to raise awareness and encourage people to make a healthy choice over the more widely advertised sugar laden alternatives.

The feedback we received following this initiative was positive with some schools using the week to introduce a water only drink policy at their schools.

### **The New Zealand Kidney Foundation recommends**

The New Zealand Kidney Foundation believes prevention is the key both to alleviate human suffering and to get the biggest gain from health-care expenditure. Much of the prevention activity lies in self care and good education of both professionals and the general public.

- The Ministry needs to embark on a massive awareness campaign to make people realize they need to exercise more and to eat less.
- The Ministry needs to support organizations health initiatives, with funding for awareness weeks and advertising, as well as research to develop more awareness programmes into obesity
- Non Government Organisations need to be included in planning government policy as they provide an important link from the community level upward.

- Promotion and support of school based programmes to change what children are eating and drinking are required, including food and nutrition policies excluding all food and drink that is not appropriate for consumption in the school environment.
- Non Government Organisations particularly focused on health are encouraged to work together to add strength and support to the health messages we want to promote.
- Given that the majority of studies report a positive association between sugary drinks and obesity, school policies need to promote water as drink of choice.
- In order to combat the growing problem of diabetes, and to reduce further burden of financial and human cost of the effects of diabetes, the New Zealand Kidney Foundation believes comprehensive public health strategies to tackle obesity, focused on nutrition and physical activity, need to be established and, crucially, properly promoted and resourced by the Government.

### **In Summary**

The New Zealand Kidney Foundation wants the Ministry to prioritize obesity at a national level to avert the national epidemic of obesity and its consequences. There needs to be a government led public health focus, committed to provide leadership and direction to impact effectively on increasing levels of obesity and type 2 diabetes.

There needs to be a strong and supported Non Government Organization sector to support good government policy and to enable policies to be challenged that fail to create healthy environments. The NGO's need to be encouraged and supported to work together for the betterment of health for all New Zealanders.

The current rate of obesity and type 2 diabetes is alarming and an urgent problem that will not be solved by the health sector alone. It is essential Government is committed to involving all sectors that are able to make an impact on this tremendous problem.

With nearly half of all new cases of kidney failure requiring renal replacement therapy being attributable to diabetes, and now more commonly, as a result of obesity, the New Zealand Kidney Foundation urges the Health Committee to address this problem now before it takes on the proportions of an epidemic.