

# Healthy Lifestyles

Healthy lifestyle issues have been very much in the news in both the lay press and the medical journals. The incidence of chronic non-communicable diseases is increasing worldwide and it is no different in Malaysia. Preventing and decreasing the incidence is related to lifestyle issues.

Before we start to deal with these issues, we need to know the extent of the problem in our community. These problems are addressed by two articles in this issue of JUMMEC.

Obesity is a problem which has been noted to be an epidemic in the west and is beginning to creep into our society. Sharif AH *et al* (1) discuss the problem of obesity among urban primary schoolchildren. They have noted the overall incidence of obesity at 9.5% based on BMI but a lower level of 3.0% based on the definition of International Obesity Task Force. These figures are lower than the earlier study done by Anuar Zaini *et al* (2), who studied a larger population. They also showed that the problem of obesity is similar among the three major ethnic groups in the country.

Physical activity is very much related to the problem of obesity. Ayiesah R (3) studied the level of physical activity among the elderly. The elderly patients were defined as those above 60 years. The group was identified from those attending the KL Health Clinic. The patients were asked to answer a self-administered questionnaire. Overall 57.1% of them were noted to be physically active, in activities that included walking, gardening, cycling, tai chi and stretching. However the levels of these activities were not mentioned. The Chinese were most active followed by the Indians and the Malays. The reason for the difference is not clear and can be a topic to be looked into in the future.

National athletes such as the Malaysian netball players are among the most physically active members of the society and are involved in various training programmes on agility and leg power. After eight weeks of training there was no significant improvement in the agility and leg power of these players overall. However, a marginal improvement on both these parameters was noted for the attacker and centre players, but not for the defender. The authors did not suggest reasons for their findings.

Breastfeeding is also a lifestyle and population education issue, and it is very important for the

medical community to play a role in enhancing this practice. The University of Malaya Medical Centre, Kuala Lumpur was recently given the recognition of Baby Friendly Hospital by the Ministry of Health, Malaysia. To this end, health care workers must be trained with the necessary skills and knowledge to stop the decline in breastfeeding. Tan KL and Ghani SN (4) did the first local study to assess the effectiveness of the lactation management course organised by the local district health office. The effectiveness was assessed by the pre- and post-training test scores. The participants showed significant improvement in scores after the course. It is interesting to note that the four doctors, who participated, did not show significant improvement.

In the era of evidence-based medicine (EBM), systemic review and meta-analysis has become important in assessing the evidence available in published literature. To be able to benefit from the review and analysis, it is important that the terms are clearly understood. Wong LP (5) has written a very clear and concise article on the definition of the commonly used terms. It is a very useful article for all, especially those doing literature search prior to embarking on a particular research.

The only case report in this issue is an interesting case of agranulocytosis secondary to carbimazole treatment of thyrotoxicosis in a pregnant woman. The article discusses in detail the management of this rare condition.

Evidence that JUMMEC continues to grow in strength and quality is provided by the article from the Department of Paediatrics. Daud SS, Ibrahim K and Arriffin H (6) report on the monitoring of haematopoietic stem cell transplant patients with high resolution microchip electrophoresis to predict relapse in these patients. Their method of chimerism analysis can help identify early relapse so that commencement of therapeutic intervention is not delayed. This, in turn, can lead to improved long-term outcome. However, this method needs validation with a larger number of cases.

With the quality of articles improving with each issue, JUMMEC will continue the quest to become an important medical journal at the national and regional level. This can in turn encourage more academic staff and researchers to submit their work to JUMMEC.

## References

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***Azad Hassan Abdul Razack, FRCS***

Professor of Urology  
Department of Surgery  
Faculty of Medicine  
University of Malaya  
Kuala Lumpur