Adult obesity has risen by 300 per cent in the UK since 1980 and could affect half the population within two decades if current trends continue, the BMA director of professional activities Vini Wannram has warned that unless governments adopt a much more long-term and interventionist approach.

By NOEL PATON

Obesity is not a new problem but it has assumed a fresh urgency as the results of the World Health Organization’s 2010 Global Obesity Report and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s latest report on childhood obesity, and the increase in UK adult obesity rates of nearly 300 per cent since 1980 is implicated in growing rates of liver and pancreatic cancer.

And the increase in UK adult obesity rates of nearly 300 per cent since 1980 is implicated in growing rates of liver and pancreatic cancer. The BMA believes the fitness deal was weighted too heavily towards the fitness industry; the association argues that private gym membership is beyond most people’s reach financially.

‘Obesity is close to 100 per cent preventable’

Dr Vini Wannram says: ‘Sadly, every recent report […] public health has led to a diminishment of the recognition of the importance of the specialty, which is so wrong it’s difficult to find a polite way of saying it.’

Poverty of aspiration

Not surprisingly, the BMA is unimpressed by the fact that supermarkets, safer cycling opportunities, better access to outside space — all of these are increasing but are being championed by the BMA and campaigning groups. ‘We cannot overlook the importance of this issue,’ says Dr Wannram. ‘Obesity is linked to dozens of different diseases — not just heart disease and stroke, but cancer and many other things — one of which is diabetes. It is not, she concedes, an obvious opinion to express with the。（）

The big picture

‘You cannot overstate the importance of this issue,’ says Dr Wannram. ‘We know that one or two supermarkets don’t like traffic lights being introduced but it’s absolutely right. We are worried about the huge amount of money that will be wasted in the attempt to address the problem of obesity.’

The Department of Health has launched the responsibility deal, voluntary organisations — including food and drink manufacturers — come to take action voluntarily to improve public health. This is a response to the joint declaration by the department of health and social care to address the issue of obesity.

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‘We’ve not found easy ways to engage with industry very much recently,’ says Dr Wannram. The Department of Health has launched the responsibility deal, voluntary organisations — including food and drink manufacturers — come to take action voluntarily to improve public health. This is a response to the joint declaration by the department of health and social care to address the issue of obesity.

‘BMI > 40? You are very welcome,’ it reads. Patients with a body mass index above 40 are a demographic to which Dr Wannram says: ‘We have to be much more involved than that. We have a vital role to play outside the consulting room and the laboratory. Governments of any sort are not really interested in preventive health care but they are interested in health care, which is the opposite of that. We need to keep reminding them that that’s the way to go.’

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