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Conference highlights causes and recommendations for Metabolic Syndrome

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The American University of Beirut (AUB) Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences, in collaboration with the AUB Medical Center's (AUBMC) clinical nutrition department and the Lebanese Academy for Nutrition and Dietetics (LAND), with the sponsorship of Abbott Nutrition, organized a two-day conference on "Dietary Management of Metabolic Syndrome" on May 16 – 17 2012, at Issam Fares Hall.



Local and regional nutritionists, health professionals and experts highlighted causes and recommendations for Metabolic Syndrome

"Metabolic Syndrome (MetS) is one of the fastest growing disease entities in the world and in the Middle East region," said Ammar Olabi, chair of the nutrition and food sciences department, to a packed auditorium of local and regional nutritionists, health professionals and experts. "Its prevalence has increased significantly in recent years, with a prevalence of between 16 percent and 40 percent among adults in our region."

MetS is a series of medical disorders, such as high blood pressure, high blood sugar and excess body fat, that, when occurring together, increase the risk of developing cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

Olabi considered that socio-economic and lifestyle changes are the major causes of the increase in MetS, with a significant impact on public health. Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) has been shown to be a key element in treating this disease and its side effects, he noted.

"One reason we are here is to recommend the numerous institutions involved to speak the same language and share their information," said Omar Obeid, nutrition and food sciences professor and conference organizer.

Obeid highlighted how fructose consumption has increased dramatically over the past 20 years and it seems to be linked with a rise in obesity and metabolic disorders. Fructose absorption is lower than that of glucose and varies greatly among people, with its metabolic effect dependent upon the amount consumed. Ingesting small amounts of fructose was reported to activate glucokinase activity and improve both glycemic and insulinemic responses. High fructose was reported to increase plasma triglycerides and reduce insulin sensitivity.

Obeid said that in humans, short-term fructose feeding increases de-novo lipogenesis and blood triglycerides and causes hepatic insulin resistance, but there is no evidence for fructose-induced muscle insulin resistance. The metabolic effect of fructose possibly might increase uric acid synthesis as well as effect energy metabolism. However the mechanism is still not clear.

"Research showed that the overall prevalence of MetS in a demographically representative sample of Lebanese adults was 31.2 percent and significantly higher in men (38.6 percent) than women (25.8 percent)," said Nahla Hwalla, dean of the AUB Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences (FAFS) and founder of LAND.

Lara Nasreddine, FAFS assistant professor, highlighted the importance of MetS diagnosis in order to identify individuals at increased risks for non-communicable diseases, therefore helping health professionals recommend lifestyle changes. Farah Naja, FAFS assistant professor, presented the results of a recent study emphasizing that the traditional Lebanese dietary pattern showed no association with MetS or its components while on the other hand there was a positive association of fast food/dessert dietary pattern with MetS and hyperglycemia among Lebanese adults.

Hind Dakhil Abboud, clinical dietician at the Department of Clinical Nutrition at AUBMC, identified how, in addition to medical nutrition therapy, lifestyle modifications such as weight reduction, decrease in body fat mass, waist circumference and waist to hip ratio, physical activity, smoking cessation and limiting are fundamental to prevention and management of MetS.

Hussain Isma'eel MD, co-director AUB Division of Cardiology Vascular Medicine Program, stressed the importance of limiting salt intake, which comes mostly from processed foods, with bread topping the list in Lebanon and how certain initiatives are already underway including consumer awareness assessments.

Other speakers included Dr. Mona Nasrallah (AUBMC), Nadine Mikati (FAFS), Mirey Karavetian (LAU), Dr. Sami Azar (AUBMC), May Sakr Maalouf (AUBMC), Jana Jabbour (AUBMC), Dr. Hashem A. Kilani (Sultan Qaboos University Oman) and Dr. Ahmed Al Khani (Al-Faisal University Saudi Arabia).

Story Highlights

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- "One reason we are here is to recommend the numerous institutions involved to speak the same language and share their information," said Obeid.

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