TRIMMING THE STATISTICS - THE CHALLENGE OF OBESITY

CAROL MATTA A state registered dietitian who has worked in the NHS since 1984. Since 1989 has been working as a community dietitian based within the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Health Authority's health promotion service.

Developed an interest in obesity from working with overweight and obese patients in clinical settings and started to question the approaches used with patients and their families. In early 1990s developed and delivered a project called Weight-Wise. This provided training and materials for primary health care staff to run weight-reduction groups in the community. She is now in the process of reviewing best approaches to managing overweight and obesity on a one-to-one basis (all ideas welcome!)

Currently her other work in health promotion includes working with the school meals service, a trainer for Helping People Change and Get Cooking for primary school teachers. She is also co-ordinating some local action on the Folic Acid Campaign.

SUMMARY Most local and national strategies for health document the health consequences of obesity and contain targets to reduce the prevalence of the condition. However, population surveys which record body weight continue to show a steady increase in the prevalence of obesity.

A number of initiatives focusing on the promotion of healthier eating habits and physical activity exist to aid the prevention and management of overweight. Some are more appropriate than others to island communities. These preventative approaches are supported by various clinical interventions for individuals who are obese. No single best practice appears to exist. A co-ordinated multi-agency approach is required if efforts to achieve targets on obesity are to succeed.

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