Gen X overtaking baby boomers on obesity

New research from The University of Adelaide shows that Generation X is already on the path to becoming more obese than their baby boomer predecessors.

Studies show that boomers currently have the highest level of obesity of any age group in Australia. However, new research by PROS and University of Adelaide PhD student, Ms Rhiannon Pilkington has revealed some alarming statistics. As part of her research, she has compared obesity levels between the two generations at equivalent ages. Using data from the National Health Survey, Rhiannon compared Generation X in 2008 to boomers at the same age, in 1989.

"This comparison paints a very poor picture of Generation X. It gives rise to major concerns for the future health of Gen X and Australia’s ability to cope with that burden," says Rhiannon, who is conducting her research in the University’s Population Research & Outcome Studies group, School of Medicine.

"At the same age, Gen X males have nearly double the prevalence of obesity: 18.3% compared with 9.4% for boomers. There is a smaller but still significant difference in females, with 12.7% of Gen X women being obese in 2008 and 10.4% of boomer females obese in 1989.

"This does not bode well for the future health of Generation X," she says. Rhiannon’s PhD research covers the health status and health behaviours of Gen X and baby boomers, and the major role the workplace has to play in their health.

"Boomers and Gen X together make up more than 75% of Australia’s workforce. Their health and the role of the workplace in promoting a healthy, or unhealthy, environment is of critical importance to the Australian economy, to society and to people’s quality of life."

"Obesity has become the new smoking – it’s a major driver of ill health, with coronary heart disease and type 2 diabetes highest on the list of preventable illnesses. Obesity also costs billions of dollars to our economy each year. Anything we can do to mitigate the damage being done to both generations of Australians by obesity will be hugely important for the future of our nation."

Rhiannon says turning to the workplace is a logical step when considering how to have a positive impact on adult health.

"The Australian government has acknowledged this with substantial investment in the Healthy Workers Initiative – more than $21 million has been granted to South Australia to deliver programs that will reduce the prevalence of being overweight and obese, and the associated behaviours in the workforce.

"We have a window of opportunity to change the health path that many boomers and Gen Xers are currently on," Rhiannon says.

Rhiannon’s study considers various factors that influence the risk of being overweight or obese, such as: work stress, type of occupation and generation. Rhiannon was also a recent Faculty finalist in the University of Adelaide’s 3 Minute Thesis competition. For more information contact Rhiannon on 8313 1209.

Successes and further research opportunities were recently presented at a seminar regarding the North West Adelaide Health Study, on Thursday, 8 November 2012. The seminar was hosted by Prof Gary Wittert, Head, Discipline of Medicine, and Mortlock Professor of Medicine at The University of Adelaide. Over 70 researchers and health professionals, were introduced to the study team and their research work. For more information contact Janet Grant on 8313 1212.

Alicia Montgomerie, Janet Grant and Rhiannon Pilkington at the NWAHS research
Recent Publications

The following research papers have recently been published by PROS researchers and collaborators

Dal Grande E, Fullerton S, Taylor A W.

Winefield HR, Gill TK, Taylor AW, Pilking- ton RM.
Psychological well-being and psychological distress: is it necessary to measure both? Psychology of Well-Being: Theory, Research and Practice 2012, 2:3: http://www.psywb.com/content/content/2/1/3

Gill TK, Taylor AW, Hill CL, Phillips PJ.

Shi Z, Taylor AW, Atlantis E, Wittert GA.


Eckert K et al: Prescription medicine use in 2004 and 2008: South Australian population data.

Gill T et al : The impact of smoking on musculoskeletal pain in the population

Avery J et al: South Australian Aboriginal Health Survey (SAAHS): Quantifying the Aboriginal Population at Risk.

Urinary Incontinence". Jodie was funded to attend this conference via a Discipline of Medicine Travel Grant and a travel scholarship from the Primary Health Care Research & Information Service.


Posters:
Avery J et al: South Australian Aboriginal Health Survey (SAAHS): Providing stable estimates of chronic conditions for South Australia
Shi Z et al. Adolescents born preterm consume more fast food
Dal Grande E et al: Can telephone surveys be used for collecting health information in Australia?

Conference Presentations:

In July, Ms Jodie Avery presented a paper at the “2012 Primary Health Care Research Conference” in Canberra entitled “Psychological Perspectives of Urinary Incontinence: A Metasynthesis”. This paper outlined a component of the analysis Jodie is undertaking for her PhD which primarily uses South Australian Health Omnibus data, entitled “Depression and its Association with the Psychosocial factors of Chronic diseases”.

Population Health Congress.

In September, PROS was well represented at the Population Health Congress in Adelaide. A number of presentations illustrating the diversity of the work undertaken at PROS. If you would like a copy of any of these presentations, please contact PROS.

Presentations:
Eckert K et al: Prescription medicine use in 2004 and 2008: South Australian population data.
Gill T et al : The impact of smoking on musculoskeletal pain in the population
Avery J et al: South Australian Aboriginal Health Survey (SAAHS): Quantifying the Aboriginal Population at Risk.

Future PhD or Honours Projects

Would you like to undertake study with PROS? We currently have a number of PhD students at different stages of their candidature.

We have a number of Honours and PhD projects available including:

Population Cohort Studies (using the North West Adelaide Health Study data)
- Medication use among women who have reached menopausal age
- Adverse events - the views of a population
- Neighbourhoods and their impact on mental health status

Epidemiological Studies in Physical Activity and Chronic Diseases
- Trends in physical activity levels among the South Australian population

Nutritional Epidemiology Research Group
- Study on the role of dietary patterns/fluid consumption patterns in the aetiology of chronic diseases

If you are interested in pursuing any of these projects or have any epidemiological or population health research interests of your own, please contact:
A/Prof Anne Taylor
anne.taylor@adelaide.edu.au
p: 61 8 8313 1211

You can also visit the Discipline of Medicine Postgraduate Research website for more information: http:// hdr.health.adelaide.edu.au/ discipline/6/16
SA Health Monitor

The Health Monitor Survey is a user pays telephone survey system that has been in operation since 1999 and is administered by PROS.

Health Monitor is an "omnibus-type" service available to government and non-government organisations to obtain data on a range of health issues within South Australia (SA).

The idea of an "omnibus-type" survey is that several organisations share the cost of conducting a survey.

The goal of the Health Monitor Survey is to collect, analyse and interpret data, which can be used to plan, implement and monitor health programs and other initiatives. Each organisation pays only for survey questions that have direct relevance to their information requirements. Surveys that focus on a specific topic may also be commissioned by a sole organization.

Three regular, state-wide surveys are conducted each year. Additionally, other studies into particular aspects of health are undertaken on an ad-hoc basis. These ad-hoc surveys may be state-wide, or within a particular region of state.

If you are interested in exploring the use of the Health Monitor for your research needs, please contact Simon Fullerton on 8313 1218 for a copy of the 2013 Prospectus for timelines and costs. The deadline for the April / May Survey questions is Fri 22nd February. Another survey is planned for Oct/November depending on interest.

SAAHS: The South Australian Aboriginal Health Survey

The SAAHS is a SA Health project developed and managed by PROS and funded by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Partnership Agreement (NPA) as part of the Closing the Gap Initiative.

The project is funded for the period June 2010 to July 2013. In 2010/2011 data were collected from Aboriginal adults (15 years and over) using an eighty question face-to-face questionnaire which was administered around the state by trained Aboriginal interviewers.

This type of representative population data collection is unique to Australia in an adult Aboriginal population and provides SA with stable estimates for chronic conditions, risk and protective factors, and cultural factors.

The advantage of the SAAHS is the extremely rigorous sampling procedure adopted, generating statistical information of the highest quality, able to be used as a representation of overall health among Aboriginal people in SA.

A sample of approximately 400 people (aged 15 years and over) is available for further analyses and reporting on request. The aim was to determine the prevalence of chronic disease and risk factors in SA’s Aboriginal population, as well as identifying any cultural factors or barriers which may impact on people accessing health services.

The SAAARC Baby Boomers Survey

In March 2012 over 1,200 South Australians born between 1945 and 1964 were asked about their lives and their future.

This is the first survey of its type to be conducted in Australia. The Baby Boomers Survey asked people about all aspects of their lives and collected information about their present circumstances and their perceptions of how things will be when they are around 70 years old.

The findings will inform planning and decision-making across government, industry and community sectors.

The research was conducted by South Australian Active Ageing Research Cluster (SAAARC) with the assistance of PROS, University of Adelaide and Harrison Health Research.

SAAARC members are researchers on ageing from the three SA universities, COTA SA and the SA Government Office for the Ageing. The research was funded by several SA government agencies, the Local Government Association and two industry related organisations.

Some key findings from this study included:

- 90% of respondents owned or were paying off their own home;
- Higher proportions of men than women and of country residents than metro are married and living with their spouse (77% country men and 65% metro men compared with 62% country women and 54% metro women);
- There are striking differences in employment situation according to sex and region. More men are in full-time permanent jobs (46% metro and 37% country) and self employed (15% and 23%) compared with women (28% metro and 18% country in FT employment and 7% self-employed);
- Between 12 and 16% of respondents reported never using the internet, and 75% or more use it regularly in all categories except country males;
- More country respondents volunteer than do metro (51-52%: 37-38%), and this applies to both sexes.

For more information contact Emeritus Prof Anne Edwards, SAAARC.

The artwork on the left depicts families coming together to share food collected from the bush (Artist Mark Elliot / Trevorrow, Ngarrindjeri Elder).
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If you would like more information about PROS services or your population research needs, please don’t hesitate to contact us. We have survey vehicles available for diverse research methodologies, as well as experts in a number of different areas. Additionally, if you are a student, we have a number of different projects available. Contact **A/Prof Anne Taylor**, 8313 1211, for more information.

PROS would like to wish everyone a safe, happy and healthy holiday season.