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Obesity: A role for nutraceuticals

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Non-communicable diseases (NCD) are the leading cause of mortality worldwide. Obesity is a key risk factor for NCD and accounts for significant morbidity, mortality and economic costs. The prevalence of obesity has increased over the past 30 years and is likely to increase further in the coming decade. This is likely related to the complex interplay of biological, behavioral, psychological, social and environmental influences, and the lack of perceived risk of the disorder in relation to health outcomes. These factors also combine to produce a condition that is difficult to prevent and difficult to treat. Population based strategies provide a cost effective and potentially highly effective way of tackling highly prevalent conditions such as obesity and relatively small changes in population BMI is likely to be associated with significant health benefits and health care savings across the population. Nutraceutical products sit at the interface between pharmaceuticals and foods. Generally low risk, they are available for self-selection by consumers and therefore can be marketed broadly to the population. Products able to help individuals achieve a tangible degree of weight-loss, that are taken up by a significant proportion of the general population are potentially able to deliver significant health benefits and healthcare savings- particularly if these can be integrated into a program of lifestyle change. A snapshot of nutraceuticals with weight-loss claims available in the Australian market is provided. The evidence supporting currently marketed products is limited but a real opportunity exists to develop, test and market effective weight loss products.

Biography

Michael Dodson is a medical graduate who completed PhD and Master's degrees in public health and health management. A previous senior medical advisor and office head at the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration, he spent two years as Associate Dean for the University of Notre Dame Australia clinical school in Melbourne before taking up the role of Medical Director for Blackmore's, Australia's most trusted nutraceutical company. He is currently a member of the Australian Advisory Committee on Non-Prescription Medicines and is an Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Western Sydney.

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