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Physical Activity among Children and Adolescents: An Asian Perspective



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Abstract. Physical activity has been known to influence health status, not just during childhood and adolescence, but also later health during adulthood. Rapid development, modernization and urbanization have affected physical activity pattern and lifestyles, which subsequently influence physical fitness and obesity rates. Physical inactivity, sedentary lifestyle, and lack of physical fitness have been linked to overweight and obesity. Moreover, physical activity levels in many Asian countries has been reported to be declining in recent years, and these changes may be a threat to future health, as low physical activity levels is an important risk factor for non-communicable chronic diseases. This presentation will investigate the levels of physical activity and sedentariness among Asian children and adolescents. It will also cover factors that influence physical activity, as well as its benefits and consequences. Lastly, interventions that focus on improving physical activity levels among children and adolescents will also be reviewed to examine factors that could lead to successful outcomes (or otherwise). It is hoped that this presentation will provide a deeper insight into the physical activity patterns and its related factors among children and adolescents of Asian origins.

Biography. Poh Bee Koon is Professor of Nutrition at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). She is Leader of the Physical Activity and Energy Metabolism Research Group, and was former Head of the Nutritional Sciences Programme at the Faculty of Health Sciences. Her research areas focus on childhood and adolescent nutrition, and her research projects are usually related to energy metabolism, physical activity and body composition. She is the Principal Investigator for the South East Asian Nutrition Surveys (SEANUTS) in Malaysia as well as the ToyBox Study Malaysia, an intervention aimed at improving healthy eating and physical activity among pre-schoolers targeted at reducing obesity rates over the long-term. She is also a co-researcher for the eight-city AsiaFit Study funded by the National University of Singapore "Initiative to Improve Health in Asia" programme. Prof Poh is a member of the Malaysian Health Professions Act 2016 (Nutrition Profession Panel). She has also been involved in several national task forces, including the Technical Working Group for Nutrition Guidelines to formulate the Malaysian Recommended Nutrient Intakes (2017), Malaysian Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents (2013) and Malaysian Dietary Guidelines (2010), whereby she led team members in preparing the physical activity guidelines section. She was also a member of the Academy of Sciences Malaysia's Task Force on Obesity, which aimed to promote policies related to obesity reduction. She also

serves as a panel member of the Malaysian Paediatric Association's Positive Parenting programme. Prof Poh is currently the Associate Editor for the Malaysian Journal of Nutrition, and acts as reviewer for many international and local journals. She has published more than 150 articles in journals, proceedings, books and book chapters; and made more than 200 presentations at conferences in the international and national arena. She has won numerous awards, including the International Nutrition Foundation–Ellison Medical Foundation Short Term Fellowship (2006), the IAEA Nobel Peace Prize Fund Schools in Nutrition fellowship (2007), the SEAMEO TROPED Regional Centre for Community Nutrition Fellowship (2011), and many Excellent Teaching, Research and Service Awards from UKM. In 2008, she was elected as a Fellow member of the Nutrition Society of Malaysia. Until recently, she served as Honorary Secretary of the Malaysian Association for the Study of Obesity (1995-2001; 2009-2017).