

3RD FIEP ASIA CONFERENCE ON PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS
(ACPES 2018)

Awareness of Normal Weight Obesity and Model Minority Myths of Asian Americans



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Abstract. This presentation will review normal weight obesity phenomenon, and its impact on Asian Americans in the United States. Obesity is prevalence in many developed countries, and also emerging in some developing countries. While body weight—a contributor of body-mass-index—is the most common and convenient, but less accurate measures to obesity and overweight; normal weight obesity cannot be detected by it. Traditionally, many societies judge individuals' obesity and their physical appearance based on media influence. This leads to a substantial misconception that Asian Americans are skinny and do not have health problems resulting from obesity and being overweight, such as metabolic syndrome. This phenomenon is particularly serious in the suburbs and rural areas with low Asian populations in the United States, which even healthcare providers and physical activity specialists are unaware of. Individuals with normal weight obesity has the equal risk levels to type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and stroke (Wong et al., 2014), which are always overlooked by the healthcare system and they do not receive appropriate health attention and care. Although World Health Organization has issued the appropriate BMI for Asian populations in 2004, it did not raise common awareness to physical and health educators, or physical activity specialists. Approximately 45.1% of Asian American adults at 18 years old or above did not meet full guidelines for either aerobic activity or muscular strengthening (CDC, 2015), including those who are at normal weight obesity. When practitioners are unaware about normal weight obesity prevalence, public are uninformed and misled by inaccurate information, with a misconception that they have no risk to metabolic syndrome due to their normal weight. This presentation will provide evidence and suggestions to advocate the awareness of normal weight obesity and to promote physical activity among native Asians and Asian Americans.

Biography. Professor Anita N. Lee is a tenured academic staff of Kinesiology and Physical Education, and Special Assistant to the Dean at School of Education and Professional Studies (2015-2017) at Eastern Connecticut State University, U.S.A. Her

research interests are in measurement and evaluation, as well as research methods of physical activity, exercise science, and physical activity and public health. Professor Lee's peer-reviewed scholarly presentations frequently feature at the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) America, American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) national conventions, Eastern District AAHPERD (EDA) conventions, Connecticut AAHPERD conferences, National Coaching Conference hosted by the United States Olympic Committee, and American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). Her new book chapter "*Science of Sport Psychology Assessment*" in *Assessment in Applied Sport Psychology* was published by Human Kinetics in the fall of 2017. Lee served as a Discipline Reviewer (Exercise Science and Physical Therapy) for the Core Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program—a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, United States Department of State; Doctoral Dissertation External Examiner for the University of Johannesburg, South Africa, and Springfield College, U.S.A. She was an Editorial Board Member of the *Measurement in Physical Education and Exercise Science (MPEES)*, and is an active academic journal reviewer of the *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (JOPERD)*, *Journal of Exercise and Sport Fitness*, *MPEES*, *Sport Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, and *Journal of Coaching Education*; research abstracts and conference papers reviewer for the SHAPE America, AAHPERD, American Public Health Association (APHA), and New England American College of Sports Medicine (NEACSM). Lee was the Chair of the Research Committee at EDA, Chair of the Measurement and Evaluation Council of AAHPERD, and Portfolio Review Coordinator of the National Council for Accreditation of Coaching Education (NCACE). She is an American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) certified Physical Activity in Public Health Specialist, Certified Health Fitness Specialist, and certified Group Exercise Leader. Lee earned Bachelor of Arts (Honour) in Physical Education and Recreation Studies at Hong Kong Baptist University, Master of Science in Recreation Management and Doctor of Physical Education at Springfield College, Massachusetts, U.S.A.