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SUBJECT: More Q and As

TO: Nanda Chitre (CN=Nanda Chitre/OU=WHO/O=EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TEXT:
I'm working on getting Q and As on the HIV vaccine. Additionally, thought you may want these--it's receiving quite a bit of attention.

Questions and Answers on NHLBI's Obesity Clinical Practice Guidelines

Q. What is NHLBI releasing today?

A. NHLBI is releasing the first Federal guidelines on the identification, evaluation, and treatment of overweight and obesity in adults. These are clinical practice guidelines for physicians.

Q. Aren't you giving a new definition for overweight/ obesity?

A. We are using the most up-to-date standards for the categories of overweight and obesity. This definition is intended to help physicians identify and treat overweight and obesity in adults. Overweight is now defined as a BMI or 25 instead of 29.9. Obesity is defined as a BMI of 30 or above. Previously, overweight was defined as 27.8 BMI for men and 27.3 BMI for women.
The definition is not "new," since it has been used by the American Heart Association and the World Health Organization, and has been in the news media.

Q. Why do you think your new definition of obesity is better?

A. Our research has shown that people with BMI of 25 percent or higher are at increased risk of hypertension, lipid disorders, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea and respiratory disorders, and certain cancers. Our definition agrees with those presented by the World Health Organization and the American Heart Association.

Q. Doesn't this mean that many more people are now classified as at a health risk because of overweight and obesity.

A. Yes. This translates into a much higher estimate of the extent of this public health problem: 97 million American adults--55 percent of the population--are now considered overweight or obese.

Q. Doesn't your new standard disagree with the National Center for Health Statistics, another government agency?

A. No. An NCHS staff person was on our team and helped us analyze research about how body mass index relates to increased risk of disease. NCHS has used the previous definition of obesity in recent research to be consistent with its other studies, but will now be using the new definition of overweight and obesity.

Q. Are you offering a new treatment for obesity?

A. No. The guidelines recommend a combination of calorie reduction and increased physical activity. Weight loss drugs and surgery are recommended at higher BMI levels.

Q. Doesn't your committee now recommend that more people be treated with obesity drugs? This seems like a campaign to increase obesity drug prescriptions.

A. No. Lifestyle changes should be tried for at least 6 months before drug therapy is considered. The standard recommends that weight loss drugs approved by the FDA may be used as part of a comprehensive weight-loss program for carefully selected patients with a BMI of greater than 30 and who have no obesity-related risk factors or diseases.

Q. Wasn't the head of your committee employed by the maker of an obesity drug?

A. No. Dr. Xavier Pi Sunyer is employed at St. Lukes/Roosevelt Medical Center in New York. As part of his work researching and treating obesity, he has conducted clinical trials on several obesity drugs produced by drug companies.

Q. Why aren't you releasing the full report?

A. The report is currently in draft form and will be released June 17. Since many members of the press were given incomplete advance information, we wanted to make sure the complete story was told.

Q. How were the guidelines produced?

A. A 24-member expert panel worked for two-and-a-half years to develop the guidelines. The team included experts in obesity research, heart disease, and diabetes. NHLBI co-sponsored the team in cooperation with the National

Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. The report was then reviewed by the members of NHLBI's coordinating committees on high blood pressure and cholesterol, which include the major medical and voluntary organizations concerned with this issue.