



## Press Release

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Jane Pratt

301-563-6526

[jpratt@obesity.org](mailto:jpratt@obesity.org)

### **Obesity Driving America's Healthcare to a Tipping Point, *Obesity Experts and Surgeons General Call on Policymakers to Adopt Obesity Recommendations***

Silver Spring, MD, September 9, 2009, The Obesity Society and other steering committee members of the Strategies to Overcome and Prevent (STOP) Obesity Alliance, and two former US Surgeons General, join together today to develop effective recommendations to urge policymakers to act on the inclusion of obesity as the largest and most urgent driving factor in healthcare reform.

The two most recent Surgeons General of the United States, David Satcher MD, PhD and Richard H. Carmona, MD, MPH, respectively 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> US Surgeons General, jointly urged policymakers to take direct action on obesity and its associated chronic diseases by including obesity as a key element in healthcare reform.

"Health reform will succeed only if we address obesity and the chronic diseases it causes," said Robert Kushner, MD, President of The Obesity Society. "Obesity is the number 1, most serious health issue facing the country. It is also the largest single driver of our increasing healthcare costs and we need to address it now."

More than one third of US adults—more than 72 million people—and 16 percent of US children are now estimated to be overweight or obese.<sup>1</sup> Obesity and overweight are associated with several chronic health risks and conditions, including: diabetes, heart disease, stroke, hypertension, some types of cancer, sleep apnea, osteoarthritis, and gallbladder disease.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the medical costs of obesity are now estimated at more than \$147 billion per year.<sup>3</sup>

The Obesity Society supports the four targeted recommendations for effective healthcare reform issued by the STOP Obesity Alliance at the meeting held today at the Newseum in Washington, DC:

- **Standardized and effective clinical interventions**, flowing from evidence-based guidelines, such as those approved by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI), that include acknowledging the health benefits of five to ten percent sustained weight loss to aid and support those individuals who are currently overweight or obese achieve improved health.

- **Enhanced use of clinical preventive services** to monitor health status and help prevent weight gain, especially for individuals who are already overweight and are at risk of becoming obese.
- **Effective, evidence-based community programs and policies** that encourage and support healthy lifestyles, focus on health literacy, address health disparities, and represent a significant investment in population-based prevention of obesity.
- **Coordinated research efforts** to build the evidence for all three of the above elements, continuously improving quality of care, bolstering our understanding of what does and does not work in various settings, and helping to translate the scientific research into practice recommendations for real-world clinical settings and communities.

“These recommendations are designed to improve the dialogue and interventions around obesity. Successful reform will address clinical treatment, prevention, community programs and research to reverse the medical burden of obesity,” said Dr. Kushner. “Lending our support to the STOP Obesity Alliance recommendations will also bring us one more step closer to providing a health system that can effectively lessen the grip of obesity on our society.”

###

#### **About The Obesity Society**

*The Obesity Society ([www.obesity.org](http://www.obesity.org)) is the leading scientific organization dedicated to the study of obesity. The Obesity Society has been committed to encouraging research on the causes and treatment of obesity and is keeping the medical community and public informed of new advances. The Obesity Society's vision is to be the leader in understanding, preventing and treating obesity and in improving the lives of those affected. The Obesity Society's membership comprises more than 2000 basic and clinical researchers, who have published extensively, and care providers in obesity treatment and prevention.*

#### **About the STOP Obesity Alliance**

*The Strategies to Overcome and Prevent (STOP) Obesity Alliance is a collaboration of consumer, provider, government, labor, business, health insurers, and quality-of-care organizations united to drive innovative and practical strategies that combat obesity. The STOP Obesity Alliance is directed by Research Professor Christine C. Ferguson, J.D., of The George Washington University's Department of Health Policy and former Health Commissioner for the State of Massachusetts. Richard H. Carmona, M.D., M.P.H., FACS, 17<sup>th</sup> U.S. Surgeon General and President of the non-profit Canyon Ranch Institute, serves as Health and Wellness Chairperson of the Alliance. The Alliance Steering Committee is comprised of the following public and private sector organizations: American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association, America's Health Insurance Plans, American Medical Group Association, Canyon Ranch Institute, CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity (DNPAO), DMAA: The Care Continuum Alliance, National Business Group on Health, National Quality Forum, Partnership for Prevention, Reality Coalition, Service Employees International Union, The Obesity Society and Trust for America's Health. The STOP Obesity Alliance receives funding from its sponsors, sanofi-aventis U.S. LLC., founding sponsor, and Amylin Pharmaceuticals, Inc., supporting sponsor.*

- 
1. Centers for Disease Control (CDC). <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/publications/AAG/pdf/obesity.pdf>
  2. Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults, **NHLBI**, [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/ob\\_home.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/ob_home.htm)
  3. Eric A. Finkelstein, Justin G. Trogon, Joel W. Cohen, William Dietz, [*Health Affairs* 28, no. 5 (2009): w822-w831 (published online 27 July 2009; 10.1377/hlthaff.28.5.w822)]