

PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
MEDIA RELEASE

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Internationally recognised obesity expert to visit ACT

Internationally renowned obesity expert Professor Boyd Swinburn will be in Canberra on Thursday 21st May to deliver the 2009 Sax Oration at the Australian National University (ANU). The Professor of Population Health and Director of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention from Deakin University in Melbourne will be speaking about causes of the current obesity epidemic and potential solutions.

“According to Professor Swinburn, identifying solutions needs specific solutions-oriented research and unfortunately most of the current research into obesity is problem-oriented. Interestingly, the solutions that are the most likely to work seem to be ‘rule-based’ solutions. For overweight individuals, so long as they can stick to a set of dietary rules which results in a reduced calorie intake, it doesn’t seem to matter what foods are included or excluded. This is why lots of different types of diets which are unrelated to the dietary causes of weight gain can produce weight loss,” explained Ms Gabrielle O’Kane, ACT President of the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA).

“Similarly, Professor Swinburn points out that at a population level, it is likely that rules or policies are likely to be the most promising for prevention. Education, guidelines, industry self-regulation, and government ads on TV are unlikely to have much influence and stronger policies will be needed. The twin bottom lines are that we need to re-orient our research towards testing potential solutions rather than just better identifying the problem, and the most promising approaches for individuals and populations will involve in identifying the right set of ‘rules’ or policies which lead to sustainable environmental and behavioural changes.

“The ACT Branch of the PHAA presents the Sax Oration each year in honour of the late Dr Sidney Sax to promote discussion on issues of importance in public health in Australia. Professor Swinburn is bound to present some very thought-provoking ideas on solutions to one of Australia’s most critical public health issues, so we are thrilled that he is able to join us here in Canberra. He is a strong advocate for policy action on obesity prevention in Australia and internationally. Professor Swinburn heads an obesity prevention research program covering 12 community-based interventions in 4 countries, policy intervention analyses, socio-cultural studies, and economic analyses. He has been a member of the international Obesity Taskforce for over 10 years,” said Ms O’Kane.

What: Sax Oration 2009 – Professor Boyd Swinburn
Where: Innovations Lecture Theatre, (opposite National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health), ANU. Enter via Eggleston Road entrance.
When: Thursday 21 May 2009
Time: 5:45pm

For further information/comment:

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