Obesity surely is and will continue to be one of the major medical scourges of this century. Equally surely, it is a malady that health professionals cannot deal with on our own. We need all the help we can get from many sources—from the community, through business and maybe even government—if significant inroads are to be made in managing such a widespread epidemic. Perhaps one of our major roles is to keep the issue in the foreground by whatever means we can devise.

The Journal is fortunate that authors have responded to our request for papers for this issue and we thank each of them for their work.

What has evolved without any active planning is that we have several distinct groups of papers—the current status of obesity and some of the sequelae, reports of what has been tried and seems to be working, and reports of what has been tried and doesn’t seem to be working.

Schumann and Remington provide a digest of the current “best guess” of the prevalence of obesity by county (p 20). The validity of self-reported data is always suspect—especially about items like weight, but at least the method for each county is consistent throughout so one can assume the results are reasonably comparable. The same applies to the report on the comparison of overweight adolescents by states in the country (p 26) by McCauley and her colleagues. Dr Fox and her colleagues review the evidence on junk foods in schools—including the 31 pounds of sugar provided annually to each student via the soda machines(!)—and some school programs in Wisconsin and the rest of the county that are trying to alter the situation. Dr McCarty and her colleagues report their findings related to food available in the workplaces of businesses in the Marshfield area. This is a first step in a program plan to promote healthier lifestyles in that city (p 66).

Finally, Dr Her and Mr Mundt report their alarming findings related to Type 2 diabetes in Ho-Chunk children and teenagers in relation to Type 2 diabetes (p 44). Burhop and his colleagues report their impressive results in laparoscopic bariatric surgery for morbid obesity in patients aged between 18 and 71 years (p 48).

The “we tried it and it doesn’t seem to be working” paper is that of Dr Rooney and her colleagues (p 54) who had the intrepidly simple idea of assessing whether pedometers given to families, with or without education, would help in controlling the weights and activity of overweight families. While the subjects expressed enthusiasm for the program, objective measurements produced disheartening results.

It leaves one wondering what we’re to do. Perhaps we should sally forth with baseball bats at the ready into the community, businesses and industry and “persuade” them that they have to get into the act of combating obesity if the scourge is to be managed!
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