How did we get here?

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World Obesity Day – Today!

This #WORLDOBESITYDAY we are calling for urgent government ACTION to end childhood obesity.

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Latest childhood obesity prevalence estimates

Planning for the worst: estimates of obesity and comorbidities in school-age children in 2025

T. Lobstein and R. Jackson-Leach
Adult BMI trends 40y by sub-region

- Relentlessly increasing trends
- Near linear
- Different starting points
- Different trajectories
- Different end points
The nature of the global obesity epidemic
Hallmarks of increasingly obesogenic environments

What will the downswing of the epidemic look like?
Good news from the US

• Declining child obesity in many areas
• Linked to comprehensive actions
• Less progress on reducing inequalities
With the turn of the epidemic, an increase in inequalities is likely

England monitoring data

**4-5 year olds**
By year & deprivation decile

**10-11 year olds**
By year & deprivation decile
Why don’t these recommendations get implemented?
Why so little progress on childhood obesity?

1. Food industry actions
   - Direct opposition (esp Coca Cola & Pepsi on SSB taxes)
   - Self-regulatory pledges/codes etc

2. Lack of government leadership
   - Weak governance systems, conflicts of interest
   - Belief in education approaches and market solutions
   - Unwilling to battle food industry (chill effect)

3. Lack of sufficient public demand for policies
   - Usually supportive of policy actions
   - Not translated into pressure for change
Obesity determinants and solutions (Swinburn et al Lancet 2011)

**Environments**

- Systemic drivers
  - Existing policy & economic systems enabling and promoting high growth & consumption

- Env moderators
  - Env drivers
  - Food supply & marketing environments promoting high energy intake
  - Socio-cultural, socio-economic, recreation and transport environments which amplify or attenuate the drivers

**Behaviours**

- Behaviour patterns
  - High food and energy ‘passive consumption’ with associated low PA levels
  - High total energy intake ‘pushing’ energy imbalance

**Physiology**

- Energy imbalance

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**Policy interventions**

- HP programs, social marketing etc

**Intervention importance & difficulty**

- Evidence uncertainty

**Drugs, surgery**
How did we get here?

• Global rise in obesogenic environments
  – Changing food environments probably predominate the drivers

• Moderated by existing environments
  – Physical, economic, policy, socio-cultural

• Known and agreed policies are not implemented
  – Food industry opposes and diverts
  – Governments are useless/corrupt/unenlightened/scared
  – Public are only quietly supportive

• Is a focus on the deeper systemic drivers of childhood obesity
  – Fanciful?
    or
  – Essential?