

**Obesity discourse and public health social marketing campaigns:
Are we getting it right?**

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Published

2013

Conference Title

Gold Coast Health and Medical Research Conference 2013

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Obesity discourse and public health social marketing campaigns: Are we getting it right?

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Introduction /Aim: Our daily lives, from school to work, television to newspapers, and billboards to postcards, are saturated by calls for us to take control of our lives, reduce the government health burden, be happier, smarter, more attractive, all by simply losing weight. Indeed, government campaigns both nationally and internationally focusing on weight loss are being supported by unprecedented amounts of funding. The aim of this project is to explore the underpinning evidence used to inform social marketing weight loss campaigns such as *Change4Life*, *Measure Up* and *Shape Up Australia*. **Methods:** A review of the obesity literature from the last 10 years was undertaken to unpack the evidence surrounding the link between health and body weight. **Results:** The review identified that there is much evidence that makes the link between health and body weight tenuous. Furthermore, there is a growing body of literature that questions our undisputed acceptance that to improve our nation's health we must decrease our waist circumferences and lose weight. **Conclusion:** Health campaigns foregrounding weight loss are grounded in the taken for granted knowledge that health can only be achieved through gaining a 'healthy weight'. Given that such campaigns are funded by public money, policy makers and marketers have the obligation to produce robust, publically informed, and evidence-based strategies. Furthermore, current and previous approaches focusing on weight loss have been unsuccessful in impacting on health or the weight of nations. We argue that public health campaigns would be more relevant to populations if achieving nutrition and physical activity goals were promoted regardless of weight loss.
