

Let's Talk - Diet, Diabetes

Like many areas of the UK, Scotland is experiencing a dramatic increase in obesity and the related health issues which arise from some members of our population being overweight. The increase in the number of people who have Type 2 diabetes correlates to this increase in obesity and the overall trend has been likened to an epidemic (see Figure 1).

The onset of Type 2 diabetes has been occurring at a younger age and many school children are now exhibiting signs which show that they are likely to have the condition in the near future. This is obviously a great concern to teachers and many are looking for ways in which they might raise some of these on-going issues in their classrooms. Clearly these are not easy matters to discuss and teachers will want to approach the discussion in a supportive environment.

The Principle and Practices: sciences [2] document for *CfE* calls for a variety of approaches to be used in teaching and learning including:

- use of relevant contexts, familiar to young people's experiences;
- collaborative learning and independent thinking;
- emphasis on children explaining their understanding of concepts, informed discussion and communication.

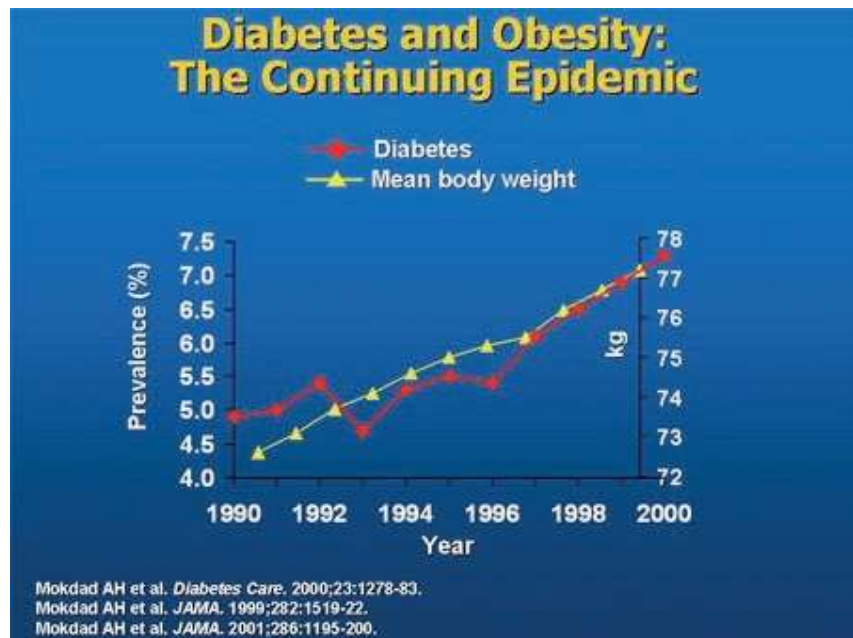


Figure 1 - Correlation between prevalence of diabetes and mean body weight [1].

Over the past 10 years at SSERC we have been producing activities which help teachers to encourage meaningful discussion about scientific issues. One of the areas which we have been developing supports science and health issues such as Diet, Diabetes and Obesity (DDO). These activities are based around a series of resources which were made possible with funding from the AstraZeneca Science Teaching Trust (AZSTT) and are aimed at upper primary and early secondary school pupils and their teachers.

There are a number of opportunities to use the DDO resource to support teaching of *CfE* as shown in the following experiences and outcomes statements:

- By investigating some body systems and potential problems which they may develop, I can make informed decisions to help me to maintain my health and wellbeing - *SCN 2-12a*.
- Having selected scientific themes of topical interest, I can critically analyse the issues, and use relevant information to develop an informed argument - *SCN 4-20b*.

and Obesity



- Having explored a range of issues which may affect food choice, I can discuss how this could impact on the individual's health - *HWB 3-34a / HWB 4-34a*.

Additionally in National 4 Science (Health Issues) diet and diabetes is suggested as a context to enable student to '...analyse and discuss aspects of healthy living and supportive environments'.

In the last few months the DDO resources have been, updated and re-designed.

In addition to the pupil activities, the new resource pack contains a comprehensive teacher guide along with background information and links to suitable websites. Earlier editions of this resource were very well received by teachers who have responded with comments such as:

- the pupils find the activities controversial and they encourage debate;

- the activities identified misconceptions pupils had. Stimulated discussion amongst the pupils. Raised their awareness of current issues;
- I found the Let's Talk Diet, Diabetes and Obesity resources extremely useful as pupils were extremely engaged by the discussion activities. In addition, pupils were encouraged to ask questions and share their opinions with the class.

The new resource pack, Diet, Diabetes and Obesity is available for purchase from SSERC. The pack contains class sets of all the pupil materials including worksheets, help-cards and a variety of activities to stimulate meaningful discussion. The cost of a pack is £10 to include postage and packing. ◀



References

- [1] Image taken from Obesity, Type 2 Diabetes, and Fructose at www.indiana.edu/~oso/Fructose/Fructose.html
- [2] Curriculum for Excellence: sciences (principles and practice). Available for download at www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningteachingandassessment/curriculumareas/sciences/principlesandpractice/index.asp