Comment on: Tseng C-H, Tseng C-P, Chong C-K et al (2006) Increasing incidence of diagnosed type 2 diabetes in Taiwan: analysis of data from a national cohort. *Diabetologia* 49:1755–1760

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To the Editor: The increasing trend in the incidence of diagnosed type 2 diabetes reported in *Diabetologia* by Tseng and colleagues [1] parallels increases in obesity. Both are matters for concern and, no doubt, associated with other markers of increasing affluence. The authors state that ‘there is an urgent need to take early action to halt this trend... especially in the young generation, in whom obesity is a potential target of intervention.’ We have reported independent dose effects for the associations of betel chewing in Keelung City with increases in the prevalence of both type 2 diabetes and the metabolic syndrome, as well as each of the five features used in the diagnosis of the metabolic syndrome, including central obesity [2]. We calculated meaningful risk ratios of 1.41 (95% CI 1.18–1.68) for type 2 diabetes and 1.78 (95% CI 1.53–2.08) for the presence of the metabolic syndrome according to the National Cholesterol Education Programme, Adult Treatment Panel III criteria [2] modified for Asian individuals [3, 4]. These associations were found in men but not in women, since too few women in Keelung City were betel

chewers to permit analyses. We also found reductions in these risks with duration since cessation of betel chewing. Our findings suggest that cessation of betel chewing could lead to a meaningful reduction in the risk of developing obesity and type 2 diabetes, in men if not in women. It is likely that a similar association would be found in the population studied by Tseng et al. [1], since the incidence of type 2 diabetes was higher among men than women and, according to our data [3], among men, betel chewers are younger than non-chewers. If associations are found, cessation of betel chewing would be an additional target for intervention for reduction in the problems of obesity and type 2 diabetes, as well as in cancer prevention [5].

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