

## Non-Traditional Factors in Childhood Obesity: The Italy-India Joint Research Programme 2012–2014

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I am pleased to introduce this special issue of the Indian Journal of Pediatrics, dedicated to the bilateral research project on obesity and overweight in children, which has been approved within the Executive Programme of Scientific and Technological Cooperation between the Italian Republic and the Republic of India for years 2012–2014, under the joint support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Indian Ministry of Science & Technology.

There is an overwhelming evidence that obesity and overweight in children is a global phenomenon affecting both developed and developing countries of all socioeconomic groups. Over 22 million children under the age of 5 are severely obese and these data represent an alarming problem, described by the World Health Organization as an “escalating global epidemic” [1]. The debate on non-communicable diseases has seen a further increase since September 2011, when, for the second time in history, United Nations’ General Assembly met on a health issue [2].

The goal of the bilateral project, led by the University teams of professionals headed, respectively, by Dr. Ileana Baldi (University of Padova, Italy) and Prof. Achal Gulati (Maulana Azad Medical College & LN, New Delhi), is indeed to create a collaboration network to promote the development of a common model for investigating non-traditional determinants of obesity in the two countries.

The present volume reports on several aspects of obesity and from different perspectives, with the aim to describe results and speculations about the role that novel risk factors may play in contributing to the obesity epidemic, while

respecting and taking into account the strong influence of culture, traditions and values that both Italy and India have strongly imprinted in their roots.

Taken the active involvement of myself and the Embassy in promoting the welfare of our children, and their future by tackling malnutrition and all its facets ranging from under- or over-nutrition and to associated comorbidities, it has become the centre of our personal effort to focus attention on the problem in order to contribute to the healthier growth of our children, which in turn contributes to the dictum that a “healthy child contributes to a healthy nation”. The problem worries us not only as individuals but also as health professionals, as economists and as governments since the issues related to it have a major impact on all the aspects of stronger and healthier nations.

I congratulate again Indian Journal of Pediatrics and its Editor-in-Chief, Prof. Ishwar C Verma, for dedicating this issue to the project and look forward to celebrate its completion in 2014.

### References

1. Obesity: preventing and managing the global epidemic. Report of a WHO consultation. World Health Organ Tech Rep Ser. 2000;894:i-xii: 1–253.
2. Koehlmoos TP. UN meeting for non-communicable diseases. *BMJ*. 2011;343:d5762.