



## **The CMA Foundation's Obesity Prevention Project**

By Carol A. Lee

CALIFORNIA IS FACING AN URGENT health crisis - nearly 60 percent of all Californians are overweight or obese and over 30 percent of California's children are at-risk of obesity.

The medical complications of overweight and obesity are devastating, and physicians are seeing obesity's effects everyday in their practices. Type II Diabetes, once thought of a disease affecting only adults, is now being seen in the state's teenagers.

California's physicians have decided enough is enough!

Michael Fisher, MD, a nephrologist in Santa Barbara County, has witnessed patients experiencing end-stage renal failure in greater numbers and at younger ages. Dr. Fisher emphasizes community action as the key to overcoming the obesity-related health problems he sees in his office.

To combat the obesity epidemic, Dr. Fisher established a Diabetes Resource Center in Santa Barbara, founded California's first chapter of America on the Move - a program that encourages physical activity - and recently received a large grant to fund the Carpinteria Childhood Obesity Initiative. And, Dr. Fisher is not alone in his efforts. Physicians throughout California have undertaken similar projects, but more physicians are needed to impact the obesity epidemic.

The CMA Foundation is working to prevent obesity related diseases by turning practicing physicians into community educators and advocates for healthy eating, physical activity, and policy change at the frontlines of the battle against obesity. Through diverse partnerships with business, government, health plans, and community organizations the CMA Foundation will utilize physicians' expertise and credibility to maximize their impact on the obesity epidemic.

This spring and summer the CMA Foundation will be conducting several regional trainings for physicians interested in preventing obesity in their own communities.

One of the first trainings will take place May 4, 2006 as a Pre-Conference Workshop at the CMA Leadership Academy at the Renaissance Esmeralda Resort and Spa in Indian Wells, CA.

The trainings will provide physicians with the information and skills necessary to affect attitudes, behaviors, environments, and policies that have contributed to the dramatic increase in California's obesity rates.

Through the CMA Foundation's statewide partners, our Physician Champions will be able to reach audiences beyond their practices, including thousands of schools, community groups, and policy makers in every county in the state to create lasting results in the fight against obesity.

Please consider becoming a Physician Champion with the CMA Foundation.

Physicians' voices have been quiet in the battle against obesity and Californians want to hear them loudly. Nearly 90 percent of Californians surveyed stated that they wanted physicians to be their primary source of information about nutrition, physical activity, and other health issues associated with obesity.<sup>1</sup>

The CMA Foundation's Obesity Prevention project will ensure physicians' voices are heard and community energy is harnessed. Our Physician Champions will be connected with school boards, county councils, and myriad other organizations to spread the message of healthy living. In addition to technical assistance from CMA Foundation staff, Physician Champions will have access to a wealth of resources on obesity prevention that they may use in their communities and with their patients.

The CMA Foundation is developing Physician Toolkits, an online Community Resource Directory, online patient education materials, and Advocacy Toolkits to provide Physician Champions with easily accessible, up-to-date information for use in their outreach and educational efforts. The CMA Foundation can help California's physicians' leave a lasting impact on the obesity epidemic.

Engaged communities and engaged physicians are vital to the health of Californians. Please consider joining the CMA Foundation's efforts to turn the tide on the obesity epidemic in California.

For more information, or to become an Obesity Prevention Physician Champion, please contact Christine Maulhardt at 916/551.2874 or at the email address below.

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1. The California Endowment - Field Research Corporation. "Survey of Californians About the Problem of Childhood Obesity". October - November 2003: 51

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