

Prof. W. Bruce Traill (University of Reading)
"The economics of obesity"
Giovedì 12 ottobre - ore 15

The seminar will have the following outline:

Introduction: the growing incidence of overweight and obesity in developed countries and the emerging importance in middle income and even low income developing countries. In Latin America, the Near East, South Africa and the transition economies the proportion of the population overweight already matches or exceeds that in most developed countries. Because of the strong link from obesity to non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, cerebro-vascular disease, diabetes and many cancers there are potential huge costs to be borne by health services in the coming years.

The economics of diet choice. A discussion of why it is economically rational in terms of individual utility (pleasure) maximisation for people to choose to be somewhat overweight and of the circumstances (related to market failure) when it is appropriate for governments to intervene. Differences between the economics approach (optimise the ill-health burden) and the public health approach (minimise the ill-health burden).

Econometric estimates of the determinants of obesity and the impact on health in OECD countries.

Policies that have been used to promote healthier eating-fat taxes, thin subsidies, labelling, promotion of healthy eating (e.g. fruit and vegetables), control of advertising to children, nutrition education.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of policy interventions in terms of eliminating market failures and achieving their other public health objectives.