Taj Taher

Research Project 2

Assignment 1 – Research Proposal

*Lambs to the Slaughter: The Childhood Obesity Epidemic*

For most of my life, I’ve been defined by two characteristics: my humor and my chubbiness. Luckily, my penchant for self-deprecatory jokes was – for the most part – able to overshadow my physical appearance. But there was nothing funny about it, really. It wasn’t funny looking in the mirror and being disgusted by what I saw every day, it wasn’t funny being red-faced and embarrassed every time I went shopping for new clothes, and it wasn’t funny believing that all the girls thought I was ugly (not that I possessed the self-confidence to make a move on them anyway).

Despite all this, I never took the steps to change anything. I made a lot of broken promises to myself that I would get my act together, but for 20 years the only thing that changed was my steadily increasing weight.

Then my doctor told me I was pre-hypertensive and at a serious risk for diabetes.

No one wants to hear that, especially when they’re 20 years old and meant to be in the prime of their life. To me, it was like being told that I was going to die. And that was when it all clicked. I started eating very healthy, I started working out religiously, and in a span of mere months, I lost a significant amount of weight and went from having an obese BMI to a healthy one.

My story of weight loss is one of victory, but sadly, it is in poor company. More than one third of this nation’s adults are obese, a statistic that stems from the vast number of children that suffer from exactly what I did. As a future pediatrician, I asked myself “What can we do for these children? Are we going to wait 20 years to tell them that they’re dying before we try to get them in shape?” Thus, in the course of my research I intend not to examine the superficial details of childhood obesity, but rather what can be done by primary care specialists to curb this epidemic. I hope to explore the ways in which both parents and children can be counseled, and clarify exactly why it is important to address both. If I hope to demonstrate anything, it is that obesity is simply a symptom of bad habits and a poor lifestyle. My goal in this research is to show that the best medicine for these children will not be delivered through pills, but through knowledge.

The underlying theme in my research is prevention. It is common knowledge that obesity is linked to heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, certain cancers, and a myriad other diseases. This is why many consider childhood obesity alarming, and its prevalence termed an epidemic. Everyone knows that this is an important topic, for the eradication of childhood obesity would significantly curb the aforementioned major endemics, cut health care costs, and boost the health and life expectancy of the nation. But those aren’t the most important reasons for why we should care about this issue. No, we should care because no child deserves to go through what I did: no child deserves to be told that they are dying before they have even begun to live.

Bekky Herr Comments:

* This looks like a really worthwhile project. Really looking forward to the final results. Will be interested to hear your thoughts on the role/responsibility of the healthcare profession to address this problem

Megan M Comments:

Hi Taj,

Fantastic job on your proposal! Such an important topic- and one I’m particularly interested in as well. Looking forward to your presentation and your final paper!