



## **Press Release for World Obesity Day 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020 & ECO-ICO Dublin 2020**

**Wednesday 4th March is World Obesity Day 2020 and Ireland hosts the European and International Congress on Obesity (ECO-ICO), at the Convention Centre Dublin 17<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

During 2020, Ireland plays a special role in making the world a better place for people living with obesity. In Ireland, we have a real understanding of the many challenges involved. More than 70% of our adult population have overweight, with over a quarter of men and a fifth of women in Ireland living with obesity.

Ireland's special impact this year starts on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020 - World Obesity Day. The Association for the Study of Obesity on the Island of Ireland (ASOI) calls on everyone to join in with organisations around the world, to push for more comprehensive solutions, treatment, and collective responsibility for addressing this global epidemic. *“Together, we can address the far reaching personal, societal, and economic impacts of obesity. See how you can be a force for change at [www.worldobesityday.org](http://www.worldobesityday.org)”* according to Dr Jean O'Connell, Chair of ASOI.

The focus for this year's World Obesity Day is to eliminate obesity stigma and prejudice. Susie Birney, ASOI patient representative, describes what life with this disease can be like:

*“People with obesity are constantly shamed and blamed for their disease. This is because many people - including doctors, policy makers and others - do not understand that obesity is a chronic disease. They see it as a simple lack of willpower, laziness, or a refusal to “eat less and move more”. But like all chronic diseases, the root causes of obesity run much deeper. They can be genetic, psychological, sociocultural, economic and environmental. It is time we break the cycle of shame and blame and reevaluate our approach for addressing this complex, chronic disease that affects 650 million people worldwide”.*

Susie is currently working to establish the Irish Coalition for People Living with Obesity (ICPO), a patient led organisation representing those effected by obesity across Ireland.

A second major impact Ireland will make on obesity in 2020 happens from 17<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> May when the ASOI will host the joint European and International Congress on Obesity (ECO-ICO) at the Convention Centre in Dublin.



ECO-ICO 2020 will draw world experts together for a four-day meeting in Dublin that explores obesity from all angles (basic science, public health, child and adolescent considerations and management of obesity in adults). This will highlight the most promising interventions to address the reality of obesity – a chronic, relapsing progressive disease.

As Dr Grace O'Malley, Chair of the Dublin ECO-ICO meeting in May explains: *“Obesity is not a lifestyle choice – it is a condition that develops due to a complex multifactorial mix of genetics, physiology, psychology and environmental factors, which can influence behaviours related to nutrition, physical activity and sleep. The four-day ECO-ICO meeting in Dublin covers these aspects and many more in multidisciplinary sessions that include eminent scientists from the range of disciplines involved – medicine, nursing, nutrition, physical activity, psychology, genetics etc. together with industries involved in developing more helpful approaches to address the obesity epidemic”.*

The participation of people living with obesity throughout the ECO-ICO meeting brings a compelling focus to the wide-ranging scientific programme. Adults sharing their everyday experiences highlights the stigma and prejudice associated with obesity, which would never be accepted in any other health condition. Real life stories of living with overweight during childhood and adolescence, when ‘fitting in’ is all important, right through to the practical everyday struggles of adult life, reveal the extent of the change in attitude required to eliminate this harmful prejudice.

New movements involving people living with obesity are rapidly gaining traction in addressing the stigma associated with obesity, such as the European Coalition for People Living with Obesity (ECPO) ([euroobesity.org](http://euroobesity.org)). ECPO is a patient led, managed and run European organisation which works collaboratively with 22 national patient organisations to ensure that people who live with, and are affected by obesity are represented across Europe in a respectful non-stigmatising way.

Vicki Mooney, ECPO Executive Director explains: *“We know that typically a patient waits on average six years to attend their GP about their weight (ACTION IO Study). We know that majority of people living with obesity feel it is entirely their own fault. We know the average person living with obesity doesn't realise how complex, progressive and relapsing and chronic obesity is. We are here to open the door to better educate patients, and society as a whole to realise that obesity is far greater than eat less and move more. We are here to change the narrative this World Obesity Day”.*

Registration is open for ECO-ICO at <https://www.ecoico2020.com/>



## Notes for Media

For World Obesity Day 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020:

We are supporting people living with obesity and overweight to advocate for their right to respectful and evidence-based care and support.

We are helping healthcare practitioners to learn more about their role in treating obesity with evidence-based non-stigmatising, person-centred approaches.

We are pushing for further research, health systems monitoring, and surveillance that are needed to address this disease.

World Obesity Day will include global recognition as well as regional and national campaigns and local activities and events. Organisations and individuals from across the world will be participating.

The ASOI members represent health professionals, scientists and researchers and patient representatives working together to address the many impacts obesity has on the lives of children, teenagers and adults living in Ireland.

*“The combined effort of the ASOI membership is our strength, as this results in the multifactorial approaches needed. The involvement of people living with obesity provides critical input and ensures all ASOI activities empower and support those bearing the burden of the disease”* according to Dr Jean O’Connell, Chair of ASOI.

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For guidance on non-stigmatising reporting about obesity in the media, [please see here](#). We especially ask that media reports on obesity refrain from using stigmatising imagery. A free image bank is also [available here](#).

For more information in relation to this or any of the specific aspects of obesity below, contact the ASOI administrator: [info@asoi.info](mailto:info@asoi.info) / +353(0)858143728

- Childhood and adolescence – Dr Grace O’Malley
- Treatment in adults – Dr Jean O’Connell
- Nutrition assessment and treatment - Dr Cathy Breen, Dr Sarah Browne
- Population health /food regulation – Dr Mary Flynn
- Patient advocacy/weight stigma - Ms Susie Birney, Dr Cathy Breen