9th July 2020

Message from your new President

It is a great honour and privilege to take over from Donna Ryan as President of the World Obesity Federation. I have learnt a lot from Donna over the past 2 years as President Elect and hope to continue the many ongoing projects she has been involved with. None of this would happen without the support of the team at World Obesity led by the CEO, Johanna Ralston.

My own background is as an academic physician with an interest in endocrinology and diabetes – I trained in Southampton, UK and spent time working there before spending eight years in London, most at the Hammersmith Hospital, where I spent 3 years in the lab working on neuropeptides involved in appetite control and developed a clinical interest in treating people with obesity. I moved to Liverpool in 1996 where I have continued basic and clinical research about obesity and its complications and developed clinical services to treat severe obesity, supported by a fantastic team of colleagues. I have also been fortunate to work with colleagues and on projects across the world, including from Europe and North America to countries as diverse as Brazil, India, Malawi and South Korea, which have helped shape my understanding of how global obesity has become.

As an organisation our membership is truly International and it is essential that this is reflected in our advocacy and scientific work, which should recognise how different cultures may have widely differing perspectives on obesity. Ensuring we have as broad a membership as possible and listening and reflecting those voices is important to me. We live in unusual times for many reasons, including accelerating climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlight many inequalities in our world. I strongly believe that we can work with other international organisations to help everyone understand how these problems are linked and help develop solutions and “build back better” to ensure everyone has access to a healthy diet, opportunities for safe exercise, and that healthcare systems can offer effective treatments for obesity.

We will continue to actively support programmes to communicate the best science, educate health professionals about obesity treatment, and encourage governments to support policies that will prevent obesity. We can use our excellent data platform to provide accurate information that can be used to highlight problems and promote successful policies in different countries and regions.

Finally, as an organisation we want to listen and learn. There is a fantastic amount of good work being done to support people with obesity by national and regional organisations as well as the many scientists, clinicians and policy makers that make up the community of which we are a part – we can and should learn from each other. As Stephen Hawking said, ‘The possibilities are unbounded. All we need to do is make sure we keep talking’.

Yours sincerely,

John Wilding
President