Health Panel: "Supersize Me" Movie Trivializes Obesity, a Serious Problem

By ACSH Staff — May 6, 2004

The movie "Supersize Me" is misleading and a perversion of healthful nutritional practices, according to physicians and scientists at the American Council on Science and Health (ACSH). The documentary follows star and director Morgan Spurlock as he overeats at McDonald's restaurants every day for one month.

According to information provided by Mr. Spurlock, in this one-month period he gained over 25 pounds and developed a fatty liver, a worsened cholesterol profile, and a diminished libido. Although Spurlock attributes these effects specifically to the food he ate at McDonald's, the simple fact is that he consumed excessive calories and did not increase physical activity to burn them off. In fact, he reduced his exercise level for the month.

"Anyone who overeats the way that Mr. Spurlock claims to have done is bound to gain weight," stated Dr. Ruth Kava, ACSH nutrition director. "Obesity is a serious problem in this country," added ACSH president Dr. Elizabeth Whelan, "and stories like this one mislead people into thinking that what one eats and where, not how many calories, are the main determinants of overweight and obesity. While the movie may entertain, it certainly does not educate."

Recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published the results of a survey summary that examined energy intake between 1971 and 2000 by adults between the ages of 20 and 74. Total reported daily calorie intake increased for both men and women. For men, the increase was on the order of about 170 calories per day and for women over 300 calories per day. Data like these should encourage Americans to focus more on calorie balance, not on particular eating venues, if we are to fight the widespread increase in overweight and obesity. Popular entertainment that misdirects attention to types of food is counterproductive.

Dr. Kava noted, "All Mr. Spurlock demonstrated is that gluttony does not lead to weight loss. We already knew that."

For more analysis of "Supersize Me," see also: "A Supersized Distortion." [1]
Links