McDonald's leads the way in calorie labeling nationwide

By ACSH Staff — September 13, 2012

The scales will soon fall from your eyes when it comes to the calorie count of your McDonald's order. Or maybe, actually, the scale will feature quite prominently in your thoughts when, by the end of 2013, the number of calories[^1] in every item offered by the ubiquitous restaurant will be listed next to it on the menu.

In truth, the McDonald's announcement is only steps ahead of a national rule that should go into effect within the next year. Nevertheless, the trendsetting franchise's apparent embrace of calorie labeling is in keeping with other health-conscious efforts it has been making which some health experts hope will set the tone for others in the food industry.

It's still an open question what kind of impact calorie disclosure rules will have on the two-thirds of American adults who are overweight or obese. While ACSH's Dr. Ruth Kava doesn't believe restaurants should be forced into calorie labeling, she thinks that, should an establishment provide calorie counts of its own volition, the measure allows customers to make more informed decisions about what they're eating.

Here on ACSH's home turf of New York City, calorie labeling has been in effect in franchises with over 20 outlets since 2008. And, although an impact on obesity rates isn't yet evident[^2], it has pushed a number of chains to offer lower-fat, lower-calorie menu options[^3]. If such an effect occurs nationwide, at the very least, those who are inclined to make smarter dietary choices will be able to do so.