Title of Project: Diabetes prevention in Asia

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Short Description

The prevalence of obesity and type 2 diabetes is increasing rapidly in many Asian countries and effective population-based preventive strategies are needed. Traditionally, such strategies have mostly focused on public education, but many factors affect healthy food choices and other lifestyle habits. It is increasingly recognized that the social, cultural, and physical environment have an important impact by making it easier or more difficult for individuals to make healthier lifestyle choices. The diverse Singapore population provides a unique opportunity to study the role of cultural norms in shaping lifestyle behaviors and health outcomes. In addition, aspects of the physical environment including availability and price of healthier foods, proximity of fast food outlets, and proximity of parks and recreational facilities providing opportunity for physical activity deserves further study. A better understanding of determinants of healthy behaviors can be obtained through multidisciplinary studies using tools from social sciences and epidemiology. Currently, we are conducting pilot studies including focus groups about eating habits in Malay, Indian, and Chinese women in Singapore and analyses of trends in obesity prevalence in Singapore. This information will be used for the development of community-based interventions that after evaluation can be implemented in Singapore and potentially other Asian countries.