

Study links 'food addiction' to obesity

September 30 2013

(Medical Xpress)—University of Queensland researchers have found most Australians and Americans believe food is addictive and comparable to drug addiction.

The researchers used an online survey to assess public attitudes toward obesity and gauge opinions on the causes and risk factors of obesity.

UQ's School of Population Health Masters graduate Natalia Lee said despite significant support to treat obesity as a form of addiction, participants saw eating and weight as an individual's responsibility.

"While participants believed food addiction to be a cause of obesity, this did not change their attitudes towards obese people or the most effective way of treating obesity," Mrs Lee said.

"This finding alone has important implications for the treatment of obesity and policy responses alike."

Dr Adrian Carter, Research Fellow from UQ's Centre for Clinical Research, said the public supported the view that some foods could be addictive, but this did not translate into support for medical treatments of obesity.

"Public health policies which experts believe will most likely reduce rates of obesity, such as regulation of food advertising and increased taxes, were also not supported by most participants," Dr Carter said.

"Participants viewed obesity as a condition that individuals had to overcome through personal choice and willpower."

Scientists hope that recognition of obesity as a form of food addiction may improve [obesity](#) treatment and foster greater public acceptance of health policies.

Results of this study show a need for further investigation to explain the inconsistency between support for [food addiction](#) and a strong emphasis on weight being a personal choice.

Read the full publication: Public Views on Food Addiction and Obesity: Implications for Policy and Treatment, published in *PLOS ONE*.

More information: www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0074836

Provided by University of Queensland

Citation: Study links 'food addiction' to obesity (2013, September 30) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-09-links-food-addiction-obesity.html>

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