

## NEWS RELEASE

Contacts: Deanie Sultana  
+61 2 8873 7108  
deanie.sultana@acnielsen.com.au

# Local GPs taking responsibility in the battle against obesity

- ***GPs say more than half of patients are overweight or obese***
- ***90% of GPs involved in patients' weight management***
- ***Obesity a serious disease and a medically relevant issue, say Aussie GPs***

**Sydney, 20 January 2006:** Australian GPs say more than half of their patients (56%) are overweight or obese and that they are playing an important role in their patients' weight management, according to online survey findings released today by leading research company ACNielsen.

The research was conducted as part of the **ACNielsen | GP Pulse**, a unique monthly online omnibus which collects responses from 300 Australian GPs. GPs were asked about their attitudes towards obesity and issues facing weight management.

Of the 300 GPs surveyed, almost all (98%) said they considered obesity to be a serious disease, and that they had recommended weight management regimes to 48% of their overweight patients and 66% of their obese patients. A further 80 percent of GPs said they considered themselves well-prepared to manage obesity. However, only 52 percent of GPs said they found weight management professionally rewarding.

"While it's encouraging to see GPs are taking Australia's obesity problems seriously, it's certainly worrying to see that for many it is not professionally fulfilling," says Rachel Carroll, Associate Director, Healthcare, ACNielsen Australia. "This lack of fulfillment could be driven by patient non-compliance, the

perception that doctors are ‘fighting a losing battle’, or even due to the lack of general recognition of obesity as a disease in its own right.”

Asked what they thought were the main reasons patients were overweight or obese, 43 percent of GPs cited lack of compliance, commitment, motivation and willpower to maintain their ideal weight as the main issues, with a further 25 percent citing lack of exercise and laziness, and 24 percent putting it down to bad eating habits.

The top three activities recommended to overweight/obese patients by their GPs were exercising (99%); cutting down on fat intake (96%); and consulting a dietician (94%). Around four in five GPs (81%) also prescribed weight loss medication, but did not consider it an effective solution used in isolation – only one in ten GPs (12%) agreed that patients could maintain weight loss with medication alone. Just over half of GPs surveyed (53%) also recommended commercial weight loss programmes, while 44 percent recommended kilojoule-controlled meals.

About one in 10 GPs (13%) were concerned with the health risks associated with being overweight or obese – the three most prevalent conditions GPs identified were high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol.

“Australians are visiting their GP or specialist up to six times a year,” noted Carroll, “and with obesity such a major concern in Australia today, it is critical that GPs be equipped with the relevant tools and information to help their affected patients implement effective weight management programmes.”

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#### About ACNielsen

ACNielsen, a VNU business, is the world’s leading marketing information company. Offering services in more than 100 countries, the company provides measurement and analysis of marketplace dynamics and consumer attitudes and behaviour. Clients rely on ACNielsen’s market research, proprietary products, analytical tools and professional service to understand competitive performance, to uncover new opportunities and to raise the profitability of their marketing and sales campaigns. To view this and other ACNielsen media releases online go to <http://www.acnielsen.com.au>

ACNielsen Australia  
ACNielsen House  
11 Talavera Road  
Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia  
Phone: +61 2 8873 7000  
Fax: +61 2 8873 7001  
<http://www.acnielsen.com.au>