

## Ethnic/Racial Difference in the Association between Obesity and Metabolic Syndrome Traits

*To the Editor:* In the important review on racial differences in the association between obesity and metabolic syndrome traits, Fernández and Allison<sup>1</sup> cited as an example the findings of Bell et al.<sup>2</sup> that the rise in the odds of having hypertension with increasing body mass index (BMI, kg/m<sup>2</sup>) was much steeper for Chinese people than for people of other ethnicities. They, therefore, concluded that differential sensitivity to the deleterious effects of obesity existed among different ethnic groups.<sup>1</sup>

However, I like to propose an alternative explanation to the one proposed by Fernández and Allison.<sup>1</sup> The Chinese have a lower baseline BMI value (average BMI = 21) than people in the Western world.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it takes less increment in the Chinese to cause the obesity-related co-morbidities such as hypertension, coronary artery disease, and diabetes.<sup>3</sup> When one looks at the plots of BMI on the abscissa against hypertension prevalence on the ordinates among men and women in

Figures 3 and 4, respectively, in the article by Bell et al.,<sup>2</sup> the curves for the Chinese men and women began to rise at a lower BMI than those of the other ethnic groups. However, the slope of the rise in the Chinese men and women was the same as that in the other ethnic groups once the rise started at a higher BMI in the latter.

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