

SCOPE

In The News!

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Childhood obesity targeted

The current generation of children may live shorter lives than their parents. That is the reality as childhood obesity continues to be a growing problem. "What we do know is that childhood obesity is now an epidemic," said Dr. Shazhan Amed, a specialist from B.C. Children's Hospital. "It is also considered a public health crisis." Obesity generally leads to further complications such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, heart problems and liver and kidney disease. Amed is leading a new pilot project, Sustainable Childhood Obesity Prevention through Community Engagement, or SCOPE, in Abbotsford and Prince George. Obesity began to rise in the 1990s, but the gravity of the situation has arisen in the past decade. "I think the urgency of the issue and the acknowledgement of the impact that this is going to have on our health system ... has really only surfaced in the last five or 10 years," she said.

At her clinics, Amed is seeing more children with significant obesity issues and high blood sugar levels. They have difficulty just moving around. The problem stems from their environment, which does not provide chances to eat healthy or be active. "More often than not, parents and children in my clinic feel helpless," she said. "But until we really understand the context and improve their environment and provide them with a supportive and healthy community in which they can live, it is going to be hard for us to make an impact on their lives." Abbotsford made for a great pilot community for several reasons, including the ethnic diversity, the socio-economic status, the amount of children in the community, and the fact Abbotsford has infrastructure that promotes healthy living. Laura Loudon will work as SCOPE's local co-ordinator.

Coming from a kinesiology background, Loudon has worked with people dealing with chronic conditions resulting from unhealthy lifestyles. "What really grabbed me with this project is now we are dealing with the children, and hopefully preventing them from ever ending up in any of my cardiac rehab programs down the road." Amed and Loudon met with a variety of community organizations and programs on Wednesday morning. They discussed the existing strengths within the community which can be used to promote healthy lifestyles. The project is a three-year pilot program, with an end goal of moving it into other communities across the province.

