

Karen A. Donato, S.M., R.D.

At the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)'s Office of Prevention, Education, and Control (OPEC), Ms. Karen Donato serves as Coordinator of the NHLBI's Obesity Education Initiative (OEI). She has been a member of OPEC since September 1986.

As Coordinator of the OEI since January 1991, Ms. Donato is responsible for the development and implementation of professional and public education materials and activities related to the prevention and treatment of obesity/overweight as well as activities related to the promotion of physical activity. Because of the relationship of obesity, overweight, and physical activity to cardiovascular disease (CVD) and to the CVD risk factors, i.e. high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol, the OEI integrates its activities with those of the National High Blood Pressure Education Program (NHBPEP) and the National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP).

Ms. Donato served as the Executive Director of the Expert Panel that developed the Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults, supervising the first evidence-based guidelines on overweight and obesity developed by the NHLBI. The clinical guidelines were released in June 1998 and published in the September '98 supplement of the Journal of Obesity Research. The Executive Summary was published in the Archives of Internal Medicine (Sept 1998), the October issues of the Journal of the American Dietetic Association and the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. She has developed numerous spinoff products based on the clinical guidelines for health care providers, as well as materials for patients and the public. Ms. Donato's advice on the issues related to overweight and obesity has been sought by numerous professional and public health organizations.

As Coordinator of the OEI, she also served as the Chairperson of the Planning Committee for the NIH Consensus Development Conference on Physical Activity and Cardiovascular Health, held December 1995. The conference's consensus statement was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, July 1996. Ms. Donato also served as a reviewer of the Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity, released July 1996 as well as a member of the steering committee for the Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity, released in December 2001.

Ms. Donato also spearheads the creation and of educational activities targeting children, youth, and families that encourage heart healthy habits in order to help prevent CVD later in life and help impact the public health burden of overweight and obesity. In this capacity, she oversees the Hearts N' Parks project supported in collaboration with the National Recreation and Park Association. The Hearts N' Parks project began in 1999 as a pilot program in North Carolina and currently involves 50 Magnet Center sites located in 10 states. Current programs include a myriad of activities that promote healthy eating and increased physical activity for children in after school programs or summer day camps, for adolescents, and for adults and seniors. The project combines and integrates the research base and resources of the NCEP, NHBPEP, and the OEI.

From 1980 to 1994, Ms. Donato served as Cochairperson and Executive Secretary of the Nutrition Education Subcommittee of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Nutrition Coordinating Committee (NCC). This Subcommittee is responsible for the review for scientific accuracy of all nutrition publications intended for the public by the various Institutes of the NIH. The Subcommittee played an instrumental in the scientific review of the USDA/DHHS "Dietary Guidelines for Americans", the Surgeon General's Report on Nutrition and Health, and the development of the NIH Nutrition Research Exhibit with its accompanying pamphlet, "Nutrition Research at the National Institutes of Health."

Ms. Donato received a bachelor of science degree, summa cum laude, in foods and nutrition from Marywood College in 1975 and a master of science degree in nutrition from Harvard University's School of Public Health (HSPH) in 1977. Ms. Donato was a candidate for a doctoral of science degree in nutrition at HSPH until 1979. In addition, she is an alumnus of Harvard's Health Lawyer's Program. While at HSPH, Ms. Donato served as a research assistant in the Nutrition Department and in the Department of Legal Medicine.