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Concurrent Session 13: Salt and Cardiovascular Disease

**Consumer awareness and behaviour related to salt consumption in Australia: more needs to be done**

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**Background** – Australian adults and children consume too much salt with adverse consequences for their health. The Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health (AWASH) aims to reduce average adult salt consumption to 6 g per day within five years and to achieve significant reductions in childhood intakes over the same time period. Annual consumer surveys are being done to establish knowledge and practices related to dietary salt.

**Objective** – The primary aim of these analyses was to collect information about adult consumer knowledge and behaviour and to assess year on year changes. A secondary aim was to collect information about parents’ knowledge and behaviour related to salt and their children’s health.

**Design** – Two surveys were conducted in March 2007/08. There were 1084 participants (52% F) in 2007 and 1016 (52% F) in 2008. Results from the surveys were summarised and compared.

**Outcomes** – Whilst ~75% claimed to check food content labels for sodium at least some of the time, <50% understood the relationship between salt and sodium. Adult awareness and behaviour in relation to salt did not change over the one year period. Over half of parents (53%) were concerned about salt in children’s food and 86% knew that salt could have harmful effects on children’s health.

**Conclusion** – Despite being aware of the adverse health effects of salt, most consumers are taking little action to reduce salt intakes. A government-led social marketing campaign and clearer labelling appears to have much to offer to consumers.