

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

“Diabolo or diabolic”

Diabolo, cylinder or bell? Which of those body-shapes appeals to you the most? And most importantly, which of those do you honestly think you fit in? These are the recently proposed female morpho-types by the Spanish authorities and the fashion industry as a first step to promote healthy standards of beauty by using body shape as a reference (Ministerio de Sanidad y Consumo, 2008).

A passionate debate emerged from the difficulties that Spanish women encountered in their pilgrimage when trying to find suitable clothes. This enterprise could prove really challenging since a difference of three or four sizes could be identified depending on the shop, brand or designer that the intrepid shopper was visiting. In addition to this, the project (MSC, 2008) is trying to address some of the controversies behind the debate of associating beauty and health and the collateral problem of eating disorders, which has been a hot issue in the recent years. The role of fashion industry in promoting eating disorders recently received a great deal of attention in Spain, and was severely criticized by both health professionals and laypeople. As a result, since 2000, fashion magazines, the Spanish Parliament has regulated advertising and fashion shows to some extent. Also, in an attempt to offer healthier female role models, several measures have been undertaken. The most important Spanish fashion event, *Pasarela Cibeles*, took a radical measure in September 2006 by banning models that did not portray a healthy look and/or had a body mass index under eighteen.

After examining the proposal of the Spanish Ministry of Health, several questions emerge. First, is this a “diabolic” classification that offers a different name, i.e. “diabolo,” to

the traditional European “90-60-90” centimeters (36-24-36 in inches)? Will this classification help women to accept the other two proposed morphologies or will it lead some of them to pursue fitting into the “diabolo” category? This seems a potential double-edged sword that may lead to what this new typology is trying to avoid. Additionally, why do female bodies have to be once again scrutinized, putting extra pressure on body image?

We think this is a promising pioneer endeavor in Europe, but we hope the proposal does not just paper over the cracks, and governments continue working together with health professionals and industry when pursuing the population’s healthy eating. It is essential to create healthy environments where individuals can make healthy choices. We should not put aside other relevant issues such as beliefs, values, perceptions, and expectations of the individual and the society they are embedded in. Nurses could and should play a major role in working with individuals and groups to promote health and change unhealthy behaviors. They may be the ones to fit together the pieces of this big jigsaw puzzle.

REFERENCE

Ministerio de Sanidad y Consumo [MSC] (2008). *Estudio Antropométrico de la Población Femenina en España*. Available from:
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Sincerely,

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