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Perceptions or Reality of Body Weight

September 13, 2013



A study conducted by Ms. Jaynie L. Gaskin, Mr. Adam J. Pulver, Ms. Kiswana Branch, Mr. Ahmed Kabore, Ms. Tabitha James graduate students at Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health at Georgia Southern University examines Perception or Reality of Body Weight: Which Matters to the Depressive Symptoms. The report is coauthored by Dr. Jian Zhang, Associate Professor of Epidemiology at the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health at Georgia Southern University. The aim of the study was to determine if perception mediates the associations between measured weight and depression. We analyzed the data of 13,548 adults age 18 or older, collected in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2005–2008. Depression status was ascertained using the Patient Health Questionnaire; and the BMI was calculated from measured height and weight.

Results showed that among women, adjusting for perception weakened the relationship between measured weight and depression. The odds ratios (OR) of depression for being obese and overweight were 2.26 [95% confidence interval (1.50–3.40)] and 1.92 (1.29–2.85) before being adjusted for perception and 1.72 (1.01–2.92) and 1.62 (1.01–2.60) when perception was adjusted for. Independent from measured weight, women who perceived themselves as underweight [OR=2.95(1.47–5.14)] or overweight [1.73 (1.14–2.61)] had an increased odds of depression compared with women who perceived themselves as about the right weight. Among men, measured weight, neither overweight nor underweight, was associated with depression, perceiving oneself as underweight [OR=2.80 (1.42–5.54)] was associated with depression.

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