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Perceptions of Child Overweight and Obesity

February 7, 2014



A collaborative study including Dr. Yelena Tarasenko, an assistant professor of health policy and management at Georgia Southern University Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health examines the accuracy of children's, their guardians', and health care professionals' (HCPs') perceptions of child overweight and obesity, the degree of agreement between their perceptions, and relationships with weight loss attempts among overweight or obese children. Out of the 4691 children and adolescents, ages 8 to 15 years, 16.4 percent were overweight (body mass index [BMI] percentiles 85–94.99) and 19.3 percent were obese (BMI percentiles =95).

Results of the study indicate children, their guardians, and HCPs underestimated child's actual overweight or obesity status. Little agreement existed between overweight or obese children, their parents, and HCPs on whether these children were overweight or obese. Overweight and obese children perceived as such by themselves, their guardians, and HCPs were 88 percent and 32 percent, respectively, more likely to attempt weight loss based on multivariable analyses. The study concluded that accurate and shared perceptions of adiposity in children and adolescents between children themselves, their guardians, and HCPs are positively associated with weight loss attempts among overweight or obese children in the United States.

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