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Georgia Southern Examined Rural-Urban Differences in Perceptions of Child Overweight

September 18, 2015



Children and adolescents residing in rural environments with higher prevalence of an overweight population may develop inaccurate perceptions of a healthy weight. This study examines rural-urban differences in perceptions of child overweight among overweight ($85 \leq \text{BMI percentile} < 95$) and obese children ($\text{BMI percentile} \geq 95$), their guardians and health care providers (HCPs), and children's concomitant weight control.

Rural residents comprised 18.8% of the study population; 41.8% of them were overweight and 58.2% were obese compared to 46.7% and 53.3% of urban peers, respectively. Misperceptions of children's weight status were 11.3 and 6.0 percentage points higher in rural children and their guardians, respectively. Recall of an HCP identification of child overweight was 6.3 percentage points lower among rural versus urban guardians.

Obesity prevention efforts may be fostered by improving accuracy of child overweight perceptions. This may be particularly impactful in rural settings, where weight misperceptions are high.

["Rural-Urban Differences in Perceptions of Child Overweight among Children and Adolescents, Their Guardians and Health Care Professionals in the United States,"](#) was published in *The Journal of Rural Health*.

Dr. Yelena Tarasenko, assistant professor of health policy and management and epidemiology of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health at Georgia Southern University (JPHCOPH) was the lead author. Dr. Chen Chen, Doctor of Public Health in Public Health Leadership alumni JPHCOPH, Dr. Bryant Smalley, Rural Health Research Institute Georgia Southern University, and Dr. Jacob Warren, Center for Rural Health and Health Disparities, Mercer University School of Medicine, were co-authors.

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