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# Georgia Southern students assess characteristics for weight underestimation of children with obesity

April 11, 2016



Younger children, non-Hispanic Black, and male children with overweight (BMI  $\geq$  85th percentile) are at greater risk for being misperceived by their parents as having a healthy or normal weight, but less is known about risk for weight misperception in the subpopulation of children with obesity (BMI  $\geq$  95th percentile). The goal of this project was to assess gender, age, and racial/ethnic differences in parental misperception of healthy or normal weight status in children with obesity. Researchers analyzed the data of 1446 children and adolescents ages 6–15 with obesity obtained from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES) conducted from 2005–2012.

The study concluded that significant age differences in the odds for parental misclassification of obesity as ‘about the right weight’ were detected in female children, but not males. Hispanic males with obesity were significantly less likely to be misperceived as being ‘about the right weight’ when compared to their non-Hispanic White peers.

“Is obesity becoming the new normal? age, gender, and racial/ethnic differences in parental misperception of obesity as being ‘About the right weight’,” was published in the International Journal of Obesity.

Mr. John Twarog, MPH student of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health Georgia Southern University (JPHCOPH) was the lead author and Ms. Maria Politis, JPHCOPH MPH alumni was one of the co-authors. MS. Emily Woods, B.S. alumni of the College of Science and Mathematics, and Ms. Lauren Daniel, B.S. alumni of the College of Health and Human Sciences also contributed to the project. The students worked with Dr. Kendrin Sonneville ScD, RD of the University at Michigan School of Public Health.

“One of the greatest assets of JPHCOPH, and Georgia Southern University as a whole, is the intellectual curiosity of the students,” said Twarog. “I hope our work will encourage other students to develop collaborative efforts in research or even community outreach, which can then be used to address public health challenges such as childhood obesity.”

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