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Georgia Southern University

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

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Younger children, non-Hispanic Black, and male children with overweight (BMI ≥ 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 ≥ 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.”
Georgia Southern Identified Social Marketing Concepts that Inform Program Adaptation
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Physical activity offers children and youth many well-documented positive effects on health. The present study adapted a community-based prevention marketing campaign (CBPM), VERB™ Summer Scorecard (VSS) to promote physical activity among minority youth in rural, southeast Georgia. The purpose of this paper is to describe the adaptation process, emphasizing methods used and lessons learned.

Formative research results suggested two changes to VSS that would be required for the program to work in this rural community – a focus on parent-child activities instead of a sole focus on youth and changes to the Scorecard that was used to track physical activity. Over the course of three years of implementation, several lessons were learned about university-community partnerships (e.g., the need for a balance of power), having a program champion, and program evaluation.

The study concluded that rural communities are a unique context, with barriers to health promotion efforts that serve to contribute to negative health behaviors and resistance to change. The limited capacity of rural communities to address physical activity makes these barriers difficult to overcome, even during implementation of evidence-based practices.

"Adapting a physical activity intervention for youth in a rural area: A case study," was published in the Journal for Georgia Public Health Association.

Dr. Moya L. Alfonso, Associate Professor of Community Health Behavior and Education at the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH) Georgia Southern University was lead author. Dr. Ashley Walker and Ms. Akrati Gupta, JPHCOPH were co-authors.