



Parkes Healthy Kids Study: BMI at pre-school immunisation and Healthy Kids Check, nurse and parent perception and level of concern.



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AIM:

To determine whether there are any associations between pre-school children’s BMI-for-age, nurse and parent estimation of weight status and parental concerns.

METHODS:

BMI was calculated on 107 children aged three to five, presenting for pre-school vaccination or Healthy Kids Check (HKC) in a rural GP practice (n=53) and Community Health Centre (n=54) between March 2012-2013 with a recalled group completing a parent survey.

In the recalled group, Community Nurses visually estimated child’s weight status prior to measuring. Parents were asked to complete a paper survey indicating their estimate of child’s weight status, level of concern and preferred sources for information/support.

Demographics were compared to assess generalisability using Chi-square tests, univariate logistic regression and Wilks-Shapiro test.

RESULTS:

Across all variables, except age, there were no statistical differences, suggesting findings are likely to generalise to the greater population of 3-5 year old in this rural NSW population.

Using CDC percentile chart classification for clinical settings, 36% of children had BMI’s in the overweight/obese percentile. Using IOTF cut-offs for research and population surveillance, 26% of children had BMI’s in overweight/obese category.

Visually, both parents and nurses significantly underestimated children’s BMI in the overweight/obese category. Sources of support that parents of children aged three to five most identified were Friends and family (72%); Pre-school or childcare (70%); local health professionals (69%); Internet (56%); Parent groups (28%) and telephone support (6%). Child and Family Health Nurses were ranked most often as first preference local health professional with GP’s ranked second.

CONCLUSIONS:

One in three pre-school children assessed in this rural clinical setting, were in the overweight/obese percentile and at higher risk for adult overweight/obesity. The HKC and immunisation point for children aged three to five is a crucial surveillance point and an opportunity for Primary Health Care Nurses to accurately screen, raise awareness and initiate management and supports for parents. Greater integration between state and federally funded health facilities, nurse education and development of local pathways and community partnerships will assist in consistent clinical practice under Australian Guidelines in the prevention and management of excess weight gain in pre-school children

For the full report on this project visit our website, follow the link to the Rural Research Capacity Building Program and click on ‘view completed projects’

Monica Murray is the Manager of Community & Allied Health Services in Parkes & Forbes, which is part of the Western NSW Local Health District.

