

Full Length Research Paper

Exploring Fayoum (Upper Egypt) preparatory school students' and teachers' attitude towards obesity as health risk

Douaa El Derwi¹, Naglaa El Sherbiny^{2*} and Adham Hazem Atta³

¹Public Health Department, Faculty of Medicine, Cairo University, Egypt.

²Public Health Department, Faculty of Medicine, Fayoum University, Egypt.

³Resident of surgery, Faculty of Medicine, Cairo University, Egypt.

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Childhood obesity is a serious non-communicable public health problem with negative physical, social, and mental health consequences. Factors contributing to childhood obesity are school nutrition, excessive snacks, fast food, lack of physical activity and family behavior. The objective of this study is to explore Fayoum preparatory of school students' and teacher's attitude concerning obesity and healthy nutritional behavior and investigating readiness of teachers to attain an active role in student's nutritional education. This was a cross sectional descriptive study implemented in three preparatory schools of Fayoum district. Multistage stratified sample of 990 students, attending first, second and third grades. In each school, two classes were randomly selected from each grade, students interviewed for filling a structured questionnaire and anthropometric measurements were taken. Teaching staff at the schools (48) shared in four focus group discussions. More girls were reported in the overweight and obese category. Almost half of the students knew the proper food for their age. 62.1% of them consumed meals in front of the TV and 44.9% ate fast foods. The majority of both students and teachers agreed that physical activity and diet controls were the main control measures of obesity. 70.8% of teachers agreed that they should have an active role in obesity prevention. It was clear that Fayoum students had some nutritional knowledge but there was a defect in practice. Effective communication and collaboration among school and home offers the possibility of improving the quality of life and reducing the health care costs.

Key words: Childhood obesity, nutritional behavioral, teachers role.

INTRODUCTION

Prevalence of childhood obesity is rising around the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) has addressed obesity as a global epidemic. There are 155 million (1 in 10) children classified as overweight, and around 30-45 million as obese, worldwide (Gabriela et al., 2007). According to WHO, non-communicable diseases will account for approximately three quarters of all deaths in developing world by the year 2020. The increase in obesity may be particularly rapid in developing countries (Roya, 2007). The importance of obesity and overweight among children has been highlighted as obesity incidence

among adolescents (10 to 18 years) in Egypt is rising rapidly, being reported that overweight represent 11.5% in boys and 15.2% in girls, while obese adolescents are 6.5% in boys and 7.7% in girls (Shaheen et al., 2004).

Prevalence of obesity not only increases with age, but there is greater likelihood that obesity beginning at early childhood will persist throughout the life span. Dramatic increase in prevalence of childhood overweight/obesity and its resultant co-morbidities such as, heart disease, hypertension, type II diabetes mellitus and early atherosclerosis warrants strong and comprehensive efforts at the preventive level (Horodynski and Stommel, 2005).

There are different factors contributing to childhood obesity, such as, schools nutrition, excessive snacks, fast food, lack of physical activity, family behavior, economic

*Corresponding author. E-mail: naglaahatem@hotmail.com.