

Abstract:

Schnohr, Christina (2004): *Health Behaviour of Greenlandic School Children - focus area overweight, dieting and body image*, Master Thesis, Institute of Public Health, University of Copenhagen

Background: Public health research is focused on the development of the obesity epidemic, which is spreading throughout the world among all demographic groups. Adolescents in Greenland are presumably not excluded from the group at risk of developing obesity.

Objective: To examine the prevalence of overweight and obesity among Greenlandic school-children by means of quantitative and qualitative methods and to determine areas of scientific interest among the population of 11 to 17 year old Greenlandic school-children.

Material: The quantitative analyses are based on data from the WHO study, Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children, which is a cross-national study performed every 4th year. Quantitative data consists of information from a total of 8.066 school-children collected in 1994 (2.999), 1998 (3.057) and 2002 (2.010). Qualitative data was collected to investigate other aspects of the area of interest and was collected from 52 students in connection to a field trip in Sept. 2003.

Methods: The questionnaires contained a number of variables relating to health behaviour and the children's social conditions. Self-reported measurements on height and weight was validated, and used to calculate the levels of BMI in the group. Logistic regression were used to examine the relations between socioeconomic status (SES) and the intake of selected food items (fruit, vegetables, sweet and soft drink) as well as the relation between self-perceived obesity, being on a diet and physical activity. The qualitative analyses were based on written essays concerning the children's perception on and knowledge of body image and obesity.

Results: The prevalence of obesity was determined to be 3.4% for boys (95% CI: 1.9-4.9) and 1.0% for girls (95% CI: 0.2-1.8). The prevalence of overweight was 20.2% (95% CI: 16.9-23.5) and 18.5% (95% CI: 15.4-21.6) respectively. Even though self-reported measures on BMI can be discussed as a source of measurement to determine the prevalence of obesity, it is a valid starting point to measure and follow-up on the prevalence of obesity among Greenlandic school-children. Approximately 20% of all boys and 30% of the girls consider themselves fat and think that they should lose some weight. The quantitative analyses pointed to social inequalities in the relation between diet and SES, even though the design does not apply to analyses on causality. The qualitative analyses revealed other important areas since a profound effect of physical activity was evident when collecting data on the body image of school-children in Greenland.

Conclusions: The prevalence of overweight is found to be slightly higher than other countries. The prevalence should be monitored closely in order to follow-up on the extent of the obesity epidemic in Greenland. The high proportion of school-children who consider themselves fat must assume to have negative effect of the psychological well-being of the entire population and a health promoting intervention should be discussed and implemented to meet this. The profound meaning of physical activity could be included to

Abstract:

Schnohr, Christina (2004): *Health Behaviour of Greenlandic School Children - focus area overweight, dieting and body image*, Master Thesis, Institute of Public Health, University of Copenhagen

a higher extent when trying to reach this group in health promoting interventions, as it have turned out to play a significant role in the lives of the study population.

Key words: Greenland, school-children, obesity, body perception, physical activity.

Original Title: *Grønlandske skolebørns sundhedsadfærd – med fokus på kostvaner, overvægt og kropsofattelse*. Original and full thesis available only in Danish.