

Survey Says: Doctors Want More Training on Childhood Obesity

Large survey reveals interest by health professionals for more training in preventing and treating childhood obesity.

A major survey published in July's *Pediatrics* exposes the challenges for health professionals in treating overweight children today. Childhood obesity has reached near epidemic levels in the U.S. and currently, nearly 14% of all children aged 6-19 years are severely overweight – almost 3-times the numbers seen just a few decades ago

In an 8-page survey, 940 pediatricians, pediatric nurses and dietitians nationwide responded to questions about their confidence, attitudes, skills, barriers and training needs in the treatment of overweight children. The survey is part of a federal effort by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau examining the growing problem of childhood obesity in the U.S.

The majority of those surveyed believed childhood obesity a condition that requires treatment, one related to risk of chronic diseases and to overall quality of life. However, over 30% of respondents did not routinely start treatment in overweight children if there were no obesity-related health problems, and even less initiated treatment in overweight children if they did not want to control weight.

The most frequent barriers to treatment indicated were lack of parent involvement, lack of patient motivation, and lack of support services.

Many healthcare professionals expressed lower confidence in treating the problem of obesity overall; however, the majority expressed high interest in receiving additional training on childhood weight management.

Results from the survey demonstrate not only a need, but a real interest, by healthcare professionals in receiving additional training on childhood obesity prevention and treatment. The importance of this survey's findings will be underscored by the future priorities, education and public health efforts in dealing with this growing problem.

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