



World Health Organisation (WHO)

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TOPICS

1. Limiting child obesity in Western countries
2. Lowering infant mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa.

CHAIRS

Amelie Wittig and Antonia Trager

Table of contents:

Limiting child obesity in Western countries.....3-8

Issue explanation.....3

Key terms.....4

Timeline.....4-5

Major invorved parties.....5

Key facts.....5-6

Possible solutions.....7

Bibliography and links for further reading.....8

Issue explanation:

Childhood obesity is one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century. It has reached tremendous levels in developed as well as developing countries.

Although the definition of overweight and obesity is changing over time it can be defined via excess of body fat. However in general childhood obesity is defined as a condition where this excess of body fat affects a child's health or well-being and therefore SDG 3 (good health and well-being) is neglected. Nevertheless the detailed definition of obesity is mostly based on the body mass index (BMI). Moreover it fails to distinguish between fat and fat-free mass and therefore might exaggerate obesity in large muscular children.

Nevertheless it not only affects physical health of children but also psychological health, social- and emotional well-being and self esteem. It is also associated with poor academic performance and lower quality of life experienced by the child. However studies believe that obese children are likely to stay obese into adulthood and are therefore more vulnerable to develop diseases such as diabetes or cardiovascular.

Causing overweight or obesity are environmental factors like school policies, lifestyle preferences which get determined by childrens' parents' lifestyle and the cultural environment. In general it is assumed childhood obesity to be a result of an increase of caloric and fat intake. This has been linked with an increase of fast food consumption as well as soft drinks which became more popular over the last decades. In addition an increasing portion of size and a steady incline in physical activity leading to an imbalance between energy intake and expenditure have been playing major roles in the rising rates of obesity all over the world.

The highest prevalence rates of childhood obesity have been measured in developed countries. However the amount of obese children is increasing in developing countries as well. Therefore the rate of nutrition related chronic diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some forms of cancer is rising likewise. Especially type 2 diabetes which develops in young ages, with childhood obesity serving as an important factor, can be seen more often. Studies show that the number of children being obese has risen enormous in developed countries over the past decades. This shows the NHANES (National Health and Nutrition Examination) Survey pointing out that overall child obesity rates have more than tripled up from 5.5% .

Key terms:

Obesity: the condition where the excess of body fat affects a child's health or well-being (BMI higher than 30 kg/m²)

Overweight: above a weight considered normal or desirable (BMI higher than 25 kg/m²)

Well-being: the state of being comfortable, healthy and happy.

BMI: Body mass index is a value derived from the weight and height of an individual. The BMI is defined as the body mass divided by the square of the body height, and is universally expressed in units of kg/m², resulting from mass in kilograms and height in metres.

NHANES: is a survey research program conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) to assess the health and nutritional status of adults and children in the United States, and to track changes over time. The survey combines interviews, physical examinations and laboratory tests.

Timeline:

01.01.1963: NHANES (National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey) begins to track childhood obesity

01.01.1988: NHANES third Examination survey begins

08.11.1990: Nutrition Labeling and Education Act of 1990 is passed

28.02.1995: A campaign called Shape Up America is founded by Connecticut Marketing Associates to try to decrease obesity in the United States.

05.06.1997: The World Health Organization (WHO) declares obesity a worldwide epidemic.

01.01.1998: The medical cost of obesity is estimated to have reached \$78.5 million.

06.01.1999: The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) officially identifies obesity as a disease.

01.01.2000: Prevalence of Overweight Among Children and Adolescents in the United States according to National Center for Health Statistics & Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

19.03.2006: Researchers discover „fat“ gene.

21.11.2009: Obesity is estimated to cost US Healthcare around \$344 Billion annually

09.02.2010: First Lady Michelle Obama creates the Let's Move Foundation to promote healthy eating and lifestyles to prevent and fight childhood obesity.

30.06.2010: NHNES find parents to play a role in childhood obesity.

07.02.2012: Strong4Life releases ads in Georgia to bring the growing concerns about childhood obesity to light that create controversy.

01.10.2012: Childhood obesity continues to rise.

01.05.2013: Film premieres about obesity in the U.S.

Major involved parties:

United States of America: One third of the children in the U.S. is overweight or obese and this is continuing to rise. Nationwide 15.8% of children ages 10-17 are considered obese. However there are reductions with significant decreases of obesity in the ages 2-to 4.

Mexico: Obesity and overweight among children increased significantly over the last 13-24 years. However the rate of increase has declined in the last 6 years. Nevertheless the burden of obesity is shifting toward the groups with lower socioeconomic level.

France: France is defying an upward trend in global childhood obesity with rates throughout the country stable or declining, although higher levels still persist in children from lower income families.

United Kingdom: Almost 60% more children in their last year of primary school are classified as "severely obese" than in their first year in the UK.

Spain: A study into child obesity in Spain says that one out of every three children between the ages of 3 and 11 years old is either overweight or obese. This figure places Spain at the top of the list for child obesity in Europe.

Key facts:

France: In order to introduce three year olds to the variety of the french cuisine schools prepare 5 course meals for them which cost around 5-6 dollar. The chefs prepare such meals not only for this reason rather than to make for a balanced meal including local food. However, as it is well known that kids won't eat „healthy“ food like vegetables, french

schools found a simple way to secretly get them to eat vegetables by deepfrying broccoli for example. This leads to a fast food being served. Furthermore the cooks keep small samples of every meal in case of any suspect illnesses. And in addition the children's parents get a menu what their childrens will eat the next two months.

Huntington West Virginia: As Huntington West Virginia is deemed to be the unhealthiest city in America Jamie Oliver (famous British cook) who transformed the British school program wants to save this American city because he believes that a little effort can make a massive difference. However he faces a huge resistance. Pizza is given for breakfast to the children. The children can't differ tomatoes from potatoes. The residents have no motivation to try a diet rather than going to the gym. All these factors lead to Jamie Oliver wanting to do a food revolution. With the help of parents and the schools he brings „healthy“ food to the schools and cooks special dishes for the students.

America:

1853: First unofficial free school lunches

1935: Congress allocated funding for school lunches

1941: 6.2 Million American children were eating government-funded school lunch

1941-1942: 454 Million pounds of surplus food was allotted to US schools

1947: Congress implements the national school lunch act which are fund programs with the Help of public money.

1966: Congress passes child nutrition act.

1969: 15% of kids were getting free or reduced price lunch

2010: healthy hunger-free kids act (sell more fruits and vegetables)

2017: 73% of kids were getting free or reduced price lunch

In addition to these achievements there are funds like the „Food research and action center“ or the „Center on budget and policy priorities“ that keep a close watch on nutrition in schools.

However brands like Tyson and Pepsico make sure that only their products are sold in schools. Therefore they develop frozen food which is only available in school cafeterias because it is the only way to cash in on school lunches.

Moreover special guidelines like the „Smart snack guideline“ have developed. They should effect a healthier snackline meaning companies have to adapt and „change“ their so far „unhealthy“ snacks. This leads to a product having 7g sugar and 25% Vitamin C in the school version while the same product in the store has 10g sugar and only 10% Vitamin C.

Although some things have changed there have been the funding fights causing 1 billion dollars being cut in schools fundings. Furthermore the funding cut was reversed leading to ketchup being seen as a vegetable as well as pizza sauce and french fries. Therefore it is not necessary to add a „real“ vegetable to a served pizza or burger meaning the diet wouldn't change.

Because special restrictions weren't made brands like Dominos pizza profit from it. They developed the so called „Smart slice program“. It says that the more pizzas you buy the more

rewards points are gained by the buyer. This is not only beneficial for the buyer but for the seller. This is also explained by Dominos: „We are proud of our school lunch product. It meets the USDA guidelines for school nutrition standards and is something that kids love to eat. It is also good for the schools, as it is simple for them to serve and keeps lunch participation rates high“.

Possible solutions:

In order to prevent obesity in advance it is important that health promotion and prevention of obesity should be done as soon as possible. This should then be considered as a duty. If there is a high rate of unemployment in a specific country there should be free investigations for children aged 2-10.

As many ingredients like industrial fructose, salt or albumen can cause obesity in young ages food makers should reduce the amount of these substances in baby food.

If there are any signs of overweight caused by a lack of movement, a change of the nutrition habit, the handling of stress or an increased use of electronic devices there should be a free and an immediate therapy to treat overweight possibly getting obese.

As child obesity is mainly caused by the environment especially by their family surroundings it is important to change. It is important to slowly change the current diet in the whole family.

However there should also be stricter rules in defining a vegetable and a fruit especially in America where ketchup, pizza sauce and even french fries count as a vegetable. If there is a law for this schools should be controlled if they are following the rules. If not, there should be fines. If there is money included the schools should rather spend the money on vegetables than on the fines being given after transgressing the law.

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