TACSM Abstract

Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity in Asian American Students Using Asian Specific Criteria to Determine Weight Classification

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ABSTRACT

Individuals of Asian descent have been found to be at greater risk of developing conditions associated with obesity at lower BMI levels compared to other ethnic groups. As a result, new criteria have been developed to identify overweight and obesity in Asian populations. The purpose of the current study was to assess the percentage of Asian children who may be at risk for health conditions associated with obesity, but are currently overlooked when standard criteria are used to determine weight classification. Data from a larger study examining the weight status of elementary students were analyzed. Participants included 585 Asian (47% female) kindergarten and 437 5th grade (46% female) students. Using standard criteria, 15.6% of kindergarteners and 29.3% of 5th graders were considered to be overweight or obese. Chi square analyses revealed that an additional 10.2% of kindergarten and 11.7% of 5th grade Asian students were identified as being at increased risk of developing conditions associated with obesity when using Asian specific criteria compared to standard criteria (χ^2=309.7, p<.001 and χ^2=260.9, p<.001, respectively). These findings suggest that when using the standard criteria to identify at risk children, a significant number of Asian students who would potentially benefit from intervention may be overlooked.