The Association of Caregivers’ Educational Level and their Knowledge of Children’s Nutrition and Exercise Behavior

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ABSTRACT

TITLE: The association of caregivers’ educational level and their knowledge of children’s nutrition and exercise behavior

BACKGROUND:
The prevalence of obesity among U.S. children age 2-19 is 17%. Obesity among black children is disproportionately higher than their white counterparts. Obesity is affected by physical and social exposures during childhood, adolescence, young adulthood and late adult life. Among the many known determinants of childhood obesity is the parental influence and home environment. Parents are instrumental in exposing children to certain foods, engaging them in physical activity and modeling other behaviors that contribute to energy balance and diet composition. Educational level and nutritional knowledge of parents also play a major role in childhood obesity.

OBJECTIVE:
To assess the association of parents’ educational level on their nutritional and physical activity knowledge.

METHODS:
This is a cross-sectional study of 72 participants from a nutrition and wellness program targeting parents of African American preschoolers. Basic demographic, child’s nutritional and physical exercise habit survey and anthropometric data were collected from all participants at baseline.

RESULTS:
77% of the participants were mothers or mothers; the mean age was 44.8 years and 13% of participants were college graduates. 66% were obese. The mean BMI was 33 kg/m2. 89% of the participants reported that their children exercise at least once a week. 51% of the participants’ children drink soda or sweetened beverages. Mothers’ educational level was significantly associated with nutritional knowledge (p = 0.01).

CONCLUSIONS:
Larger sample size and longer time evaluation are needed to assess the association and impact of maternal education on parents’ knowledge of physical activity and nutrition and their children’s behavior.

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Parents play an instrumental role in modeling their children’s health behaviors and exposing them to new foods, and engaging them in physical activities. Larger sample size and longer time evaluation are needed to assess the association and impact of parental education on their child’s nutritional and physical activity habits.

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REFERENCES:


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