



**Increasing awareness
of obesity as an
epidemic and probable
solutions available**

PURPOSE

- Obesity is an epidemic and now the number one killer of Americans by contributing to cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, cancer, and many other deadly diseases. Obesity is difficult to control with the two main variables, being diet and exercise, having multiple influences that lead to or detract from physical fitness including familial diet and eating behaviors, lack of time to exercise, convenience of junk food, and advanced technologies that require little to no physical exertion.

PURPOSE (cont)

- This study is to determine attitude and awareness of childhood obesity of school-aged children in Belvidere, IL public schools. The knowledge of 4th grade children was assessed in making nutritional choices and exercise to control obesity. Following pre-test, a brief educational session, and post-test, these children will have a better understanding of health and wellness that begins with proper nutrition and activity. The goal at the end of the study is to develop young and fresh minds that will maintain healthy habits for a more productive life as a whole person, physically, mentally, and emotionally.

METHODS

- A specially designed pre-test, an educational seminar, and a post-test, all age-appropriate for 4th -grade children will be utilized to determine their knowledge regarding the benefits of a proper diet and exercise routine in developing a healthy and physically-fit lifestyle. The post-test will be given to measure changes in attitudes toward diet and exercise to control the obesity epidemic. This study will also incorporate the schools' menu plans and nutrition outline to compare available food choices with appropriate food choices.

METHODS (cont)

- The pre- and post- tests will be placed in an envelope for each student, but will have no identifying comments. The students will place the completed tests in an envelope, seal it, then return to the primary investigator; all actions in attempts to keep responses anonymous. Following the educational session, each child will receive a prize for participating in the study. Prizes will include toys which promote activity: jump ropes, Frisbees, etc. Responses will be evaluated by the primary investigator, and statistical values will be calculated to determine whether or not the educational session made a significant difference in the knowledge and attitudes of fourth grade children with respect to nutrition, activity, and the effects on health and wellness.

RESULTS

Pre-Test

- 93% of students understood concept of a BMI
- 66% said obesity is becoming more prevalent
- 76% said there are health risks associated with obesity
- 59% said people with chronic illnesses associated with obesity spend more on health care than those without chronic diseases associated with obesity
- 76% said they would be willing to change their activity level and diet to prevent childhood obesity

Post-Test

- 100% of students understood concept of a BMI
- 78% said obesity is becoming more prevalent
- 80% said there are health risks associated with obesity
- 66% understood that those with chronic diseases associated with obesity spent more on health care costs than those without chronic diseases
- 90% said they would be willing to change their activity level and diet to prevent childhood obesity

RESULTS (cont.)

Pre-Test

- 69% said they would be willing to help others prevent childhood obesity through moral support
- 90% said they understood that proper nutrition and exercise were crucial to maintaining a healthy weight
- 45% said that watching television and playing video games contributed to obesity

Post-Test

- 83% said they would be willing to help others prevent childhood obesity through moral support
- 90% said they understood that proper nutrition and exercise were crucial to maintaining a healthy weight
- 70% said that watching television and playing video games contributed to obesity
- 93% said they learned much from the class and planned to use what they learned to help maintain a healthy weight and to be a positive role model

CONCLUSION

- The goal of this study is two-pronged. The first was to determine the initial awareness of and attitudes toward childhood obesity. The second prong being to determine if an educational seminar would be beneficial in young children in efforts to change attitudes and behaviors with respect to childhood obesity. The results demonstrate the initial awareness of this topic was somewhat lacking with respect to knowledge of its prevalence and what contributes to obesity. The educational seminar proved to be beneficial in increasing awareness of childhood obesity and should be continued on a regular basis. Further, more in depth, longitudinal studies should follow this simplistic model to determine the long-term benefits of a positive impact on the obesity epidemic.