



Developmental and Behavioral Pediatricians' Evaluation and Management of Overweight and Obesity in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Background: Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have a higher prevalence of overweight (OWT) and obesity (OB) than children without ASD. The role of developmental and behavioral pediatricians (DBPs) in managing this issue in children with ASD has not been described.

Methods: We performed a secondary data analysis of children with ASD who had at least one visit to a DBP at one of three Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics Network (DBPNet) sites from January 2010-December 2011. Measured weight, height, and age at visit were used to calculate BMI z-score. For those children who were OWT (BMI z-score >85th and <95th percentile) or OB (BMI z-score >95th percentile), we assessed the frequency of weight and/or nutrition-related ICD-9 coding to assess for management of OWT and OB.

Results: The sample consisted of 4,562 patients between the ages of 2 and 19 with height and weight first measurement at mean age 8.1 (sd 4.2) years. About 15% of subjects were overweight and 21% were obese. Of those with OWT or OB at any time point, few had an ICD-9 code related to weight status or nutritional counseling (OWT 1.4%; OB 12.5%). Medication use and older age were related to an increased likelihood of having codes related to weight status.

Conclusions: Despite the high prevalence of OWT and OB in children with ASD, few DBPs seem to document addressing this issue in the context of their practice, although there may be higher awareness when children are on taking medications. We suggest more training and support for DBPs to manage this important health issue for children with ASD.

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