Randomised Controlled Trial of the MEND Program: A Family-based Community Intervention for Childhood Obesity

The physical and physiological impact of obesity on a person are well documented. In order to address paediatric obesity in London, UK, the Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do it (MEND) community-based programme was implemented on a group of 54 8-to-12 year olds. This six-month program was “an integrated, multicomponent healthy lifestyle program based on the principles of nutritional and sports science plus, from psychology, learning, and social cognitive theories and the study of therapeutic processes”. Its goal was to train families in weight management through (1) motivation, (2) skills training, and (3) motivational enhancement. The 18 group sessions parents and children participated in included nutritional, behaviour change and exercise sessions.

Baseline data were collected for all 54 children who received instruction in the programme; 37 were assessed at the six-month mark and 42 were assessed six months later at the 12-month follow-up. These measurements were of body weight, height, waist circumference, body composition, cardiovascular health, physical activity/inactivity, self-esteem and social class. The effects on the adiposity of the children from the intervention were measured by waist circumference, body mass index (BMI) and body composition. Both waist circumference and BMI decreased in children who had participated in the intervention. Only small changes in body composition were noted. Physical activity increased and children were “fitter as indicated by the reduction in recovery heart rate following the 3-min step test”. A key part of the program was its “acceptability to families - all the children who started it completed it”, which in conjunction with its success makes it a promising intervention for future use.