Trends in Pediatrician Practices and Attitudes Concerning Obesity Treatment and Management: Results from National Surveys, 2006-2017

Janice L. Liebhart, MS,1 Mary Pat Frintring, MSPH,2 Amanda N. Fisher, MS,2 Sandra G. Hassink, MD, MS, FAAP1 and Stephen R. Cook, MD, MPH, FAAP1,3

1American Academy of Pediatrics, Institute for Healthy Childhood Weight
2American Academy of Pediatrics, Department of Research
3University of Rochester Medical Center

Background
• During the past decade, there has been an increasing focus on obesity assessment and prevention within pediatric primary care practice.
• Less attention has been given to obesity management and treatment in this setting, and little is known about trends in pediatrician practices and attitudes in this area.

Objective
• Examine trends from 2006 to 2017 in pediatricians’ practices and attitudes regarding treatment and management of overweight and obesity.

Data and Methods
Data
• Nationally representative surveys of non-retired, U.S.-based pediatricians from the American Academy of Pediatrics’ Periodic Survey:
• Randomly selected sample drawn from the AAP’s member database:
  ▪ 2006 response rate=63%
  ▪ 2017 response rate=50%
• Analytic sample restricted to pediatricians who provide health supervision and are not residents (2006=655; 2017=533)

Sample Demographics (2017)
• Gender: Female 68%; Male 32%
• Age < 50 years: 52%
• Practice setting: Solo/two-physician:18%; Group practice/HMO: 64%; Medical school/hospital/health center: 18%
• At least half of time spent in general pediatrics: 95%
• Part-time: 28%
• Work area: Suburban: 47%; Urban, not inner city: 22%; Urban, inner city: 16%; Rural: 19%

Key Variables
• Survey year: 2006 and 2017
• Confidence in discussions/counseling
• Referrals to dietitians and weight management programs
• Attitudes on treatment and management

Analysis
• Chi-square analyses examined responses across survey years; unadjusted percentages are presented.
• McNemar analyses compared 2017 responses about referring patients to dietitians vs. weight management programs for 3 patient weight groups
• Multivariable logistic regression examined the independent effect of survey year, controlling for gender, age, practice setting, time in general pediatrics, part-time, and work area; adjusted odds ratio (AOR) and 95% confidence intervals (CI) are presented.

Confidence in Counseling about Obesity
• Pediatricians in 2017 (vs. 2006) were more likely to report being very or somewhat:
  ▪ Comfortable discussing obesity with families: AOR 1.99, 95% CI 1.18-3.36
  ▪ Prepared to counsel on obesity: AOR 2.69, 95% CI 1.60-4.52
  ▪ Effective in counseling on obesity management: AOR 1.91, 95% CI 1.49-2.44

Weight Management Referrals
• Pediatricians in 2017 (vs. 2006) were less likely to refer overweight patients to dietitians (AOR 0.68, 95% CI 0.51-0.81); they were more likely to refer patients in all groups to weight management programs:
  ▪ Overweight: AOR 1.53, 95% CI 1.11-2.11
  ▪ Obesity without complications: AOR 1.38, 95% CI 1.06-1.77
  ▪ Obesity with complications: AOR 1.43, 95% CI 1.10-1.86

Atitudes on Treatment and Management
• Pediatricians in 2017 (vs. 2006) were:
  ▪ More likely to agree that dietitians vs. weight management programs are not covered by health insurance*† (AOR 0.60, 95% CI 0.46-0.76) and (AOR 0.39, 95% CI 0.30-0.51), respectively.
  ▪ Similarity likely to agree that patients are not able to pay for uncovered services and there is a lack of weight management services in their practice area.

Confidence in Discussions/Counseling

Attitudes on Treatment and Management

Analysis

Results

Data and Methods

Table: Trends in Confidence in Counseling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable discussing obesity with families</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared to counsel on obesity</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective in counseling on obesity management</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results: Trends in Confidence in Counseling

Fig. 1: Percent of pediatricians who report very or somewhat... 

Results: Trends in Weight Management Referrals

Fig. 2: Percent of pediatricians who refer patients to dietitians... 

Results: Trends in Attitudes on Treatment and Management

Fig. 3: Percent of pediatricians who strongly agree or agree... 

Conclusion

Limitations

Acknowledgements

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• We are grateful to all of the pediatricians who participated in the Periodic Survey.