Pediatricians’ Practices on Early Nutrition, Feeding, and Growth: Results from a National Survey of Pediatricians, 2017

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BACKGROUND
American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendations related to growth & nutrition for children aged 0-2 years include:
- Use of World Health Organization (WHO) growth charts for plotting weight-for-length
- Exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months & continued breastfeeding for ≥12 months
- Solid food introduction around 6 months
- Providing guidance to parents on nutrition-related topics

OBJECTIVE
Assess pediatrician practices related to nutrition, feeding, & growth for children aged 0-2 years

DATA AND METHODS
- Data
  - Randomly selected sample drawn from AAP’s member database (Response rate = 50%)
  - Analytic sample restricted to pediatricians who provide health supervision (n=704)
- Analysis
  - Descriptive statistics were used to examine pediatricians’ use of WHO growth charts, recommendations for breastfeeding & solid food introduction, and discussion of healthy behaviors
  - McNemar tests compared responses for introduction of different solid foods at <6 months
  - Chi-square tests examined differences in responses by practice setting:
    - Solo or 2-physician practice (n=95)
    - Group practice (n=364)
    - Hospital or clinic setting (n=208)

RESULTS

- Growth charts
  - Percent reporting use of WHO age- & sex-appropriate growth chart for children <2 years

- Breastfeeding
  - Percent reporting usual recommended length of breastfeeding

- Solid food introduction
  - Percent reporting recommended timing of solid food introduction*

- Healthy behaviors
  - Percent discussing healthy behaviors at most or all well-child visits

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS
- Most pediatricians use WHO growth charts at well visits for children 0-2 years
- Most pediatricians discuss a variety of healthy behaviors with parents
- Relatively few discuss responsive feeding behaviors
- Discussion of healthy behaviors differs by practice setting
- Provision of recommended guidance on breastfeeding and solid food introduction timing is more mixed
- Continued efforts to support pediatricians’ work related to early nutrition, feeding, and growth are needed

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