

Prevalence of Severe Childhood Obesity in Wales

, Beynon and Bailey, 2020



INTRODUCTION

This prevalence study, carried out between 2013/14 - 2-17/18, aimed to investigate trends in severe childhood obesity in Wales.

It discovered much higher levels of severe childhood obesity in areas of socioeconomic deprivation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- The financial cost of obesity to the NHS Wales is huge.
- Severely obese children are at greater risk of many health conditions, ie type 2 diabetes; hypertension; fatty liver disease and premature death.
- Following the Marmot Review, 2010, it was revealed that social deprivation had an influence on obesity, therefore this study aimed to find out more information on this relationship.
- It aimed to examine trends on obesity in 4 and 5 year olds in school in Wales, between 2013/14 and 2017/18.

METHODS

- The study used pseudonymised data from the childhood Measurement Programme (CMP). The CMP measures children's heights and weights annually, approx 30000 children each year.
- Trained staff, standardized equipment and methodologies were used.
- In addition to these figures, an analysis of the postcodes of the children was collected. This was to identify any variabilities in the levels of obesity dependant on area of deprivation.
- Deprivation was measured using the Welsh Index of Multiple deprivation, (WIMD).

PARTICIPATION

HOW MANY?

In Wales a mean of 93.3% of eligible children participated.

BOYS V GIRLS

Less boys than girls took part.
93.1% boys Vs
94.4% girls.



92.4% children were measured in the most deprived area Vs 93.8% in the least deprived.

COMPATIBLE AREAS

FINDINGS

- There are significantly higher levels of obesity in areas of socioeconomic deprivation.
- Levels of severe obesity in boys were significantly higher than in girls.
- Non-significant but increasing trend of severe obesity in 4-5 year olds.

WHAT ELSE?

Limited evidence

There is limited evidence on the prevalence of severe obesity in children, so this study helps in establishing the amount of extra services needed for this group. Each Health Board can assess more appropriately what is needed and where!



Bold action needed

The study elucidates the scale of the need for public health interventions in Wales. It is shown in the increasing trend of severe obesity. It calls for a second measure of children, to allow tracking of severe obesity over time. Wales needs bold action to tackle obesity, see Healthy weight: Healthy Wales. (WG, 2023).

What Else?

Ethical dilemmas

Further debate is needed in public health regarding the use of surveillance data in this way.

Using the CMP data to identify individuals and instigate action.

The lack of current support for these children identified as severely obese.

Debate

There is increasing debates as to whether severe obesity should be considered as a child protection issue.

There have now been teenage deaths which have been attributed to obesity. With this the public and political opinion may soon start changing.

What Next...

01

Limitations

What do you think are some limitations to this study?

02

Tackling Obesity

Read the policy: Healthy Weight Healthy Wales, Welsh Government, 2023.

03

NICE

Look at the recommendations that NICE make on tackling obesity.

References

- Claire Beynon, Linda Bailey, Prevalence of severe childhood obesity in Wales UK, *Journal of Public Health*, Volume 42, Issue 4, December 2020, Pages e435–e439, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdz137>
- Welsh Government, 2023. 'Healthy weight Strategy' Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/healthy-weight-strategy-healthy-weight-healthy-wales>

