

ABSTRACT

An epidemiological study on overweight and obesity in Varese's Province.

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Aim

In 1998 the World Health Organization designated obesity as a global epidemic (1). In Europe the rate of obesity among children and adolescents has increased in terms of prevalence and also gravity. According to the Statistical Institute (ISTAT), the prevalence of the overweight and obesity among children in Italy ranges from 22 to 33%.

This report wants to estimate the prevalence of overweight in our Province and the nutritional choices of the children recruited for this study, in order to plan intervention of healthy food education that can change lifestyle's behaviour.

Methods

The study is a project of the Azienda Sanitaria Locale proposed to the paediatricians with the contribution of the Epidemiological Service and of the U.O. Nutrition of the Hygiene Food Nutrition Service (SIAN – Servizio Igiene Alimenti Nutrizione). Through decision tables was defined to use a questionnaire on: food assumption's frequency (n. 8 simple questions to be answered by parents); and the second part dedicated to the children's height and weight measures using a standardised protocol; and a third section dedicated to the acquisition of birth weight, the breast fed time.

Results

The resident population aged six years at the time of 31/12/2002 in the Varese's Province was 7003. The Epidemiological Services of the ASL of the Varese's Province has defined as a representative sample of the study population the 10% of the resident children. In fact, in order to show a prevalence of overweight and obesity of 20% with an estimate error of +/- 3% is sufficient a sample of 653 children.

The questionnaires filled out by the pediatricians (103 over 105 pediatricians) were 2557: 1338 males and 1212 females (35% of the target population); the values of BMI have been compared to the Cole's curve.

Among these children the prevalence of overweight and obesity is 17,7% and 7.2%.

L'intervallo di confidenza al 95% del nostro campione di obesi è risultato pari a +/- 0,010 e 1,818 rispetto a quello di uno studio eseguito su bambini residenti a Milano (campione di riferimento=12354, obesi=1606 con una prevalenza di obesità pari al 13%) di +/- 0,006 e 0,005.