

PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR CHILD'S WEIGHT AND FACTORS RELATED TO CHILDHOOD OBESITY

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Background and aims: Efforts to decrease childhood obesity may begin with accurate parental recognition of their overweight children. Using a written survey and body habitus silhouettes of children, this study examined parents' perceptions of their child's weight and factors related to childhood overweight (OW).

Methods: 285 parents of children between 2 years and 18 years being seen at six general pediatric practices that participate in the Southwestern Ohio Ambulatory Research Network (SOAR-Net) were asked to complete a survey that included demographics, varying children's body silhouettes (slender to OW) and whether their child was OW. Weight and height were measured to create a body mass index (BMI) for each study child.

Results: Study children's mean age was 8.4 (SD, 4.3) years and 34% were OW (BMI \geq 85th percentile). Compared to BMI measured during the office visit, sensitivity of parents identifying their child as "slightly" or "very" OW was 42% (95%CI:32-53%). Sensitivity of parents' selection of body silhouette for their child was similar (43%). The specificity of parents' written or silhouette estimates was much higher (>96%). Compared to parents of healthy weight (HW) children, parents of OW children were more likely to report that they themselves were overweight (61% vs 77%, $p=0.02$), they "limited" their child's eating (38% vs 62%, $p<0.001$) and annual household income was $< \$50,000$ (57% vs 79%, $p<0.001$).

Conclusions: The specificity of parental estimates of their child's OW status was much higher than sensitivity. Childhood OW was related to a number of factors.