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Trends in Growth and Weight Abnormalities of School Children and Adolescents in Ota, Southwest Nigeria

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E: Andrija Stampar Hall (Millennium Hall)

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ABSTRACT: Body weight abnormality, particularly underweight or obesity, is linked with high morbidity and mortality rates. The objective of this study was to determine the growth and weight abnormality pattern in school children and adolescents in Ota, Nigeria. A total of 926 subjects (357 boys and 569 girls) aged 2–19 years, randomly selected from schools in Ota, participated in the study. The subjects were divided into five groups: early childhood (2–5 years), middle childhood (6–9 years), late childhood (10–12 years), early adolescence (13–16 years) and late adolescence (17–19 years). Weights and heights were measured and used to calculate body mass indices (BMI). Body weight categories were defined using CDC age- and sex-specific BMI cut-offs. Results showed progressive growth in both sexes; weights and heights increased steadily with age. Weight abnormality (22.4% overall) decreased with age; it was 43.8%, 31.1%, 20.0%, 19.5% and 17.7% respectively in early childhood, middle childhood, late childhood, early adolescence and late adolescence. The study showed that weight deficiency (underweight) and weight excess (overweight + obesity) co-exist in school children and adolescents in Ota, Nigeria. Weight deficiency prevailed in early childhood whereas weight excess was more prevalent in older children and adolescents. Underweight occurred most (29.2%) in early childhood while overweight (12.2%) and obesity (9.2%) were highest in middle childhood. Weight deficiency was 10.4% in boys and 7.9% in girls whereas weight excess accounted for 13.9% in girls and 12.6% in boys. The prevalence of underweight, an index of under-nutrition, in early childhood underscores the high level of under-five mortality in Nigeria. Malnutrition in children must be addressed if Nigeria hopes to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG-4) of reducing child mortality by a two-third by the year, 2015. **Keywords:** Obesity, Overweight, Underweight, Children, Adolescents, Nigeria

Learning Objectives: Identify the growth and weight abnormality pattern in school children and adolescents in Ota, Nigeria. Analyze the relationship between the weight abnormality pattern and child morbidity and mortality rates among age groups in Nigeria. Discuss the trends in weight abnormalities in Nigeria vis-à-vis other countries. Evaluate Nigeria's chance of attaining the Millennium Development Goal (MDG-4) of reducing child mortality by a two-third by 2015

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