

Background and Significance

- Over the last 40 years childhood obesity rates have more than tripled affecting approximately 20% of children.,
- Obesity now the most common chronic childhood disease.,
- Approximately 60% of overweight children 5 to 17 have at least one cardiovascular disease risk factor, 25% have two or more.,
- Once obese, children have an 80% chance of staying obese.,
- Healthy behaviors and lifestyles established at a young age support prevention of long-term adverse health consequences and comorbidities for overweight/obese children.,
- The necessary diet and exercise education are not currently being addressed appropriately in our schools nationwide.,
- Every year students receive less than 8 hours of required nutrition education.,
- From 2000 and 2014 schools providing the required nutrition education have decreased from 84.6% to 74.1%,
- Parents that actively participate in their child's lifestyle changes produce positive long-term improvement in weight control.,
- Parental involvement is essential to any sustainable changes in eating and physical activity behavioral patterns.^{2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16}

Clinical Question

How does a parent/caregiver-based childhood obesity prevention educational program impact the family's knowledge and practice of preparing healthy meals and engaging in physical activity?

Methods

Design: Program Evaluation

Intervention: Three weekly 1-hour virtual sessions implementing the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's (NHLBI) *WeCan!* Energize Our Families: Parent Program

Outcome Measures:

- Questionnaire about dietary and physical activity habits
- 15 questions: 4 true/false, 6 Likert scale, and 5 demographic questions
- Completed before Session 1 and after Session 3

Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics

Sample and Setting

- **Sample Size:** 12 Parents and Caregivers
- **Setting:** Virtual Sessions via GoogleMeets



Weekly Virtual Session Approach

We Can! Parent Program was developed to educate caregivers on how to help themselves and their families maintain a healthy weight by improving their diets and physical activity levels

Pre-Program: *WeCan!* Parent Program Evaluation: Tell Us What You Think Form (Baseline Information)

Session 1: Portion Distortion – How much is too much?

Session 2: Energy In – Maintain a healthy weight

Session 3: Energy Out – Less sit, More fit!

Program Completion: Repeat *WeCan!* Evaluation Form (Program Effectiveness)

Results

Measure	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Mean Difference	% Change
Energy balance knowledge	2.33	2.40	.07	3%
Portion size knowledge	1.67	2.20	.53	32%
Portion sizes attitudes	4.58	4.60	.02	0%
Portion size behaviors	6.25	8.00	1.75	28%
Healthy eating attitudes	14.00	14.20	.20	1%
Physical activity behaviors	20.67	21.8	1.13	5%

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Discussion

- More family-based intervention programs needed to help limit disconnect from children and caregivers learning separately
- There are not many parent/caregiver-based programs in the community – indicates need to develop these programs
- Positive changes in portion size behaviors may suggest the program influenced participant's amount of food per serving
- Changes in energy balance knowledge, physical activity behaviors, and portion size and healthy eating attitudes can be attributed to the high pre-test response score means that did not leave much room for improvement
- These changes could be attributed to building upon an already well-educated, health-conscious participant pool opposed to concluding the program was unsuccessful

Limitations:

- Digital sessions due to COVID-19 social distancing protocols prohibiting in-person meetings, internet fatigue, inconsistent attendance across sessions, and small sample size

Implications and Recommendations

Practice:

- Family and parent-based programs for children who are at risk for becoming overweight or obese are the most effective prevention and treatment programs.
- Program can be used by any practice or school district to increase nutrition/exercise health knowledge and behaviors
- Future replications of the *WeCan!* program should use a face-to-face format at a more conducive time of day.

Policy:

- Continuation of strict regulations for the free school breakfast and lunch programs
- Encourage physical education standards to have a minimum of 150 minutes per week

Economic:

- This project did not measure cost savings however, it can be inferred that increased healthy behaviors may decrease the rate of obesity and overall associated healthcare costs.

For contact information and references scan QR code

