

A Family Based Strategy for Addressing Childhood Obesity in an At-Risk Population

Charles D. Sands, PhD¹
 Alan P. Jung, PhD¹
 English H. Gonzalez, MD, MPH²

¹Samford University, Birmingham, AL
²St. Vincent's East Family Practice Center, Birmingham, AL

Background

- **Diet and physical activity patterns are established early in life and these behaviors are modeled by family members**
- **Early intervention efforts addressing the child and family are needed to prevent obesity later in life (Fitzgibbon et al., 2002)**

Literature Review

- **Current programs to combat childhood overweight lead to short-term improvements in outcomes relating to obesity and chronic disease prevention with no adverse effects noted (Flynn et al., 2006)**
- **Pediatric primary care providers may under-recognize and under-treat childhood obesity (Barlow et al., 2007; O'Brien et al., 2004)**

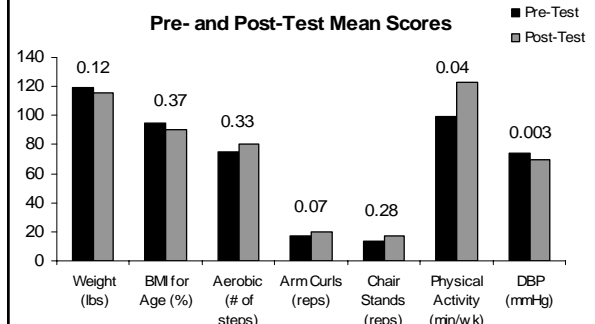
Purpose

- **The purpose of this study was to target the family unit to address the childhood overweight/obesity problem in an at-risk population in the Birmingham-Hoover MSA focusing on children ages 8-13 years old**

Method

- **Participants**
 - (n=9) children, ages 8-13
 - Identified by a family physician as at-risk for overweight or obesity
- **Procedures**
 - Weekly intervention meetings
 - Incorporated five strategies of physical activity, nutrition education, behavior modification, family counseling, and medical interventions
 - Children and their parents were given daily assignments that were tied to individualized goals determined at the outset of the program
 - Assignments included didactic and experiential learning opportunities as well as a daily physical activity program
- **Assessments**
 - Physiological and behavior change assessments were performed at the beginning and end of the 6-week intervention program

Results



Discussion

- **Though some of the measures did not show a significant difference there was a trend towards positive change in each of the variables assessed**
- **Perhaps the most promising finding of this study was the significant increase in physical activity, which portends future positive health outcomes**

Conclusion

- **Therefore, a 6-week family-based intervention to combat childhood obesity can be successful in modifying behaviors and influencing physiological change in this sample of adolescents**