Recent Findings from Health Behavior in School-aged Children (HBSC): Obesity and Bullying

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Background

- HBSC was initiated in 1982 by three countries, shortly afterwards adopted as a WHO collaborative study.
- Now has 43 member countries/regions in Europe and North America.
- A collaborative project between national research teams and in partnership with WHO.
- Surveys 11-, 13-, and 15-year-olds every 4 years including a standard international questionnaire in all countries (latest survey 2005–2006; 2009-2010 in planning).
Broad Aims of HBSC

- To increase understanding of young people's health and well-being, health behaviors and their social context

- To inform and influence policy and practice at national and international levels
At every age, U.S. boys (34%) were more likely to be overweight or obese than youth in 39 other developed countries (International boys - 16%)

Compared to girls in the other countries, U.S. girls ranked second (U.S. girls - 26% vs. International girls - 11%)
Obesity - Diet

- A significantly larger percentage of U.S. children (20%) ate two or more servings of fruit every day than children from other countries (International average - 18%)

- But the Healthy People 2010 goal is for 75% of the U.S. population 2 years and older to eat at least 2 servings of fruit a day
Obesity - Diet

- Evidence shows that consumption of soft drinks is related to adiposity and secular trends indicate an increase in soft drink consumption by U.S. children.
- A significantly larger percentage of U.S. children (36%) drank soft drinks every day than children from other countries (International average - 25%).
HBSC data show that eating breakfast is related to better weight control and eating at fast food restaurants is associated with obesity.

U.S. students are less likely to eat breakfast every day than 80% of the countries surveyed.

45% of U.S. students said they eat at fast food restaurants at least once a week.
Obesity - Dieting

- U.S. boys ranked number one (19%) on dieting to lose weight compared to all other countries
- U.S. girls rank among the top countries on dieting to lose weight (25% at age 11, 29% at age 13, and 26% at age 15)
Physical Activity (PA)

- U.S. boys were in the top 10% for physical activity among 13- and 15-year-old boys internationally.

- The percent of U.S. girls meeting national guidelines for moderate to vigorous physical activity decreases with age (from 26% at age 11 to 14% at age 15).
Sedentary Behavior (SB)

- A significantly larger percentage of U.S. children (66%) met the recommendations for watching less than 2 hours of TV per day than children from other countries (International average - 64%)

- The Healthy People 2010 goal for U.S. high school students is to increase this number to 75%
Physical activity and sedentary behaviors are relatively independent and have different correlates.

Across 5 regions of North America and Europe, PA was positively related to 5 indices of positive physical, psychological, and social health.
Sedentary Behaviors and Health Indices

- Across 5 regions of North America and Europe, sedentary behavior was negatively related to Self-Image.
- Sedentary behavior was positively related to Health Complaints, Physical Aggression, and Alcohol Use across all regions.
Fighting

- A significantly smaller percentage of U.S. children (10%) were in a physical fight 3+ times in the last 12 months than children from other countries (International average - 14%)
- 37% of U.S. students responding to the HBSC survey engaged in a fight at least once in the last 12 months
- The Healthy People 2010 goal is to reduce the proportion of students in grades 9 to 12 who engage in a physical fight in the last 12 months to 32%
Bullying

- Previously, U.S. students were more likely to be bullied or to have bullied others compared to the all-country average for bullying.
- In 2005/6, 11% of U.S. school children had been bullied at least twice in the last two months, which is below the international average.
- Since 1997/8, bullying decreased in the U.S. but increased or didn’t change in prevalence in all other English-speaking countries participating in HBSC.
U.S. Trends in Occasional Bullying and Victimization

*Secular trend p<.05
U.S. Trends in Chronic Bullying and Victimization

*Secular trend p<.05

*Secular trend p<.05
Thank You

Questions about the study can be directed to Ronald Iannotti at: iannottr@mail.nih.gov