



### **Obesity in ethnic minority children and adolescents: developing acceptable parent and child-based interventions in schools and places of worship**

- The overall prevalence of childhood obesity is levelling off in the UK but this is not evident among socio-economically disadvantaged children and ethnic differences are apparent.
- Few intervention studies involve ethnic minority groups and those that exist are largely US based and focused on treatment rather than prevention of childhood obesity.
- This study aimed to conduct developmental research in areas of ethnic diversity in both schools and places of worship to identify culturally acceptable child- and family-based interventions.
- Awareness of some healthy eating messages (e.g. five-a-day fruit and vegetables) was widespread across ethnic groups but there were gaps in knowledge, such as a lack of awareness of physical activity recommendations for children.
- For ethnic minority groups, a key facilitator of healthy lifestyles included regular family meals. Concern was expressed about the proliferation of fast food outlets near homes and schools, the perceived danger of outdoor spaces and, for Black Caribbean and Black African parents, lack of traditional ingredients in large supermarkets.
- Interactive intervention sessions to facilitate active learning to address gaps in knowledge and promote skills and habits yielded the most favourable results.
- Participation rates were high for all dietary and physical activity assessment measures with no significant linguistic or cultural issues.
- There is a need to augment food composition databases with ethnic-specific foods to improve cultural appropriateness.
- Feedback from teachers, parents and key contacts in places of worship signaled approval of the intervention.
- The feasibility of delivering intervention sessions may be better in schools but raises the question of the extent of compliance and sustainability of behaviour change in the long-term, without the culturally-focused support for families from their communities.

**Details of the research team:** Seeromanie Harding<sup>1</sup>, Maria Maynard<sup>1</sup>, Graham Baker<sup>2</sup>, Emma Rawlins<sup>3</sup>, Ashley Adamson<sup>4</sup>, Annie Anderson<sup>5</sup>, Nanette Mutrie<sup>2</sup>, Mark Petticrew<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>MRC/ CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit; <sup>2</sup>University of Strathclyde; <sup>3</sup>University of Edinburgh; <sup>4</sup>University of Newcastle; <sup>5</sup>University of Dundee; <sup>6</sup>London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

**About PHRC:** The Public Health Research Consortium (PHRC) is funded by the [Department of Health Policy Research Programme](#). The PHRC brings together researchers from 11 UK institutions and aims to strengthen the evidence base for public health, with a strong emphasis on tackling socioeconomic inequalities in health. For more information, visit: [www.york.ac.uk/phrc/index.htm](http://www.york.ac.uk/phrc/index.htm)

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