
INTRODUCTION

Obesity prevention

Obesity is one of the most important public health problems in Mexico and in Mexican-Americans. Over the years we have seen in Mexico, as in other Latin American countries, an important increase in its prevalence among all age groups, and obesity-related diseases are now the main all-age mortality cause. In 2006, a joint US-Mexico workshop on preventing obesity in children and youth of Mexican origin was held in the National Institute of Public Health in Cuernavaca.* This group described three main reasons for collaboration focusing on child obesity on both sides of the border: 1) the gravity of the obesity problem among Mexicans in both countries, 2) the large population sizes involved and 3) common cultural and socio-economic factors within this population. During that meeting it was concluded that bi-national collaboration in training, disease surveillance, information dissemination and development of public policy and programs to prevent obesity between these countries was imperative.

In 2009 under the leadership of the San Diego Prevention Research Center - Institute of Behavioural Community Health (IBACH) of San Diego State University, a collaborative project "GOL: Guideline to Obesity Prevention in Latin America and United States", was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with the Mexican National Institute of Public Health as partner. This project focus was to analyse *obesity-related interventions on adult and childhood obesity in Mexico and US*. As part of this project, we wanted to create a special journal issue with studies targeting Mexican or Latin-American population that have not been published in peer-reviewed health journals, but that have important implications for obesity prevention and control.

This special publication includes a total of 10 articles that present the work of researchers from both

public and private research institutions in Mexico and in USA. We included articles that implemented lifestyle interventions for prevention and/or treatment of obesity in Mexican and Latin American populations. The studies focused mostly on increasing physical activity, promoting healthy eating and water consumption, and targeting different age groups in various settings. We also included two systematic review articles focusing on effective healthcare interventions for childhood obesity in Latin America and a review of interventions for increasing physical activity and healthy eating among overweight and obese children in Mexico.

Nowadays, Mexico has national policies that will help tackling this problem. However, there is still a need of evidence on cost-effective interventions and policy options that can be applied to Mexicans or Latin American populations. This evidence could help policy makers, the public health scientific community, and other stakeholders to develop and implement health policies in Latin American countries based on the best available, evidence-based information.

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This publication will be one of the first supplements to put together studies made by researchers interested in obesity prevention across Latin American population, particularly in Mexican communities contributing to document current efforts.

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* Institute of Medicine. Joint US-Mexico Workshop on Preventing Obesity in Children and Youth of Mexican Origin. The National Academies Press, Washington DC (2007).

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