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### WEIGHT PERCEPTION: A HIDDEN ASPECT IN CHILDHOOD OBESITY

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**Background:** Overweight/obesity is common disease globally. Management of obesity in children is usually not rewarding because of many barriers. Prevention of obesity is therefore of priority importance. Proper weight perception among parents and adequate weight counselling from health care providers are important for the success of any prevention programmer for childhood obesity.

**Objectives:** This study looks at weight perception among parents and health care providers in Sharjah, UAE.

**Methods:** Retrospective review was done for 1000 patient files aged 2 to 18 years who visited UHS pediatrics OPD during 2015. Purpose of the visit, diagnosis of weight status, and any documented general or specific weight counseling in cases of overweight/obesity were reviewed. Age and weight status were diagnosed according to CDC criteria.

**Results:** Among the 1000 patients enrolled in this study 73 (7.3%) patient were overweight, 107 (10.7%) patient (10.7%) were obese and 817 (81.7%) patient (81.7%) had normal weight. Visits of obese or overweight children (180 patients, 18%) was Weight related in only 6 patients (3.3%) while it was due to Weight unrelated causes in 174 patients (96.7%). Weight counseling was found with 38 patients out of 107(35.5%) in the obese group (including the six patients visited specially for obesity), in four patients out of 73 (5%) in overweight group and in two patients out of 817 (0.2%) in normal weight group.

**Conclusion:** Most of parents in UAE are unaware of overweight/obesity as a medical disease. Many physicians practice weight counselling only if the patient's visit is for weight abnormality, this applies even to cases of obesity. Weight counselling in children with normal weight is not a routine practice among most physicians.

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