

Association between nutrition knowledge and weight status in adolescents

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: A broader knowledge about healthy eating can have positive repercussions on adolescent nutrition, improving nutritional status and preventing future diseases^[1]. **OBJECTIVE:** The objective of this study was to compare nutritional knowledge according to weight status in adolescents. **METHODS:** Data of this cross-sectional study comes from the "Ver para Querer" project, conducted in 2017 with 446 adolescents in the 2nd and 3rd cycle of secondary education (52% girls, 11.9 ± 1.54 years). Weight and height were assessed according to standard procedures and appropriate instruments^[2]. Weight status was classified according to body mass index World Health Organization criteria in normal weight, overweight and obese^[3]. Nutritional knowledge was assessed through the Nutrition Questionnaire (adapted from General Nutritional Knowledge Questionnaire)^[4], consisting of 4 sections that translate specific knowledge: dietary recommendations, nutrient content of food, healthier food choices and diet-disease relationship. The total score of the questionnaire corresponds to the sum of the scores of the 4 sections, and higher scores translate better nutritional knowledge (range between 0 and 100). ANCOVA was used to compare nutritional knowledge by weight status, adjusted for confounding variables (degree of student's education, socioeconomic status and age). **RESULTS:** The results showed that 23.3% of the adolescents were classified as overweight (23.9% girls and 21.7% boys) and 8.3% as obese (7.9% girls and 9.3% boys). It was found that overweight boys compared to normal weight boys had higher knowledge in the diet-disease relation section (39.6 ± 2.9 vs. 29.6 ± 1.7, respectively, $p= 0.003$). No statistically significant differences were observed in the other sections, in the total score for girls (all weight status categories) and obese boy's adolescents. **CONCLUSION:** With this study we conclude that there were no significant differences in nutritional knowledge according to weight status, except in overweight



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boys who presented higher knowledge in health/disease issues regarding diet. Well-designed education programs addressed to teenagers are needed.

Keywords: *adolescents; nutrition knowledge; obesity; public health intervention.*

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