A systematic review of community-based interventions for the treatment of adolescents with overweight and obesity

Adolescent obesity has been widely acknowledged as a risk factor for obesity and other chronic diseases in adulthood. In addition to physical health repercussions, childhood and adolescent overweight and obesity can also have psychological repercussions. Given the increasing amount of autonomy acquired during adolescence, it is essential that we focus our efforts in addressing the challenges associated with that demographic. As identified by the 2016 Report of the World Health Organization Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity, the provision of ‘family-based, multi-component, lifestyle weight management services for children and young people who are obese’ as part of universal child and adolescent health care has been recommended. Consequently, the aim of this review was “to evaluate the characteristics and effectiveness of scalable community-based secondary prevention and weight management programs for adolescents (aged 13-17 years) with overweight or obesity.”

Overall, 31 studies describing 21 programmes were included in this systematic review. A majority of the programmes were multi-component and simultaneously involved physical activity and dietary components. Some also included a psychological component ranging from mindful eating to stress management sessions. However, research is still needed to identify the sustainability and scalability of such programmes, which in turn will "provide the best evidence for policymakers to implement ‘family-based, multicomponent, lifestyle weight management services for children and young people who are obese’ as recommended by WHO.”