A systematic review of the effectiveness of individuals, community and societal level interventions at reducing socioeconomic inequalities in obesity among children

The complications arising from childhood overweight and obesity are well-documented. Additionally, there seems to be socioeconomic inequalities in obesity, and addressing them is becoming of high importance on the public health agenda. The aim of this systematic review was to examine the effectiveness of different levels of interventions to reduce socio-economic inequalities in obesity-related outcomes among children.

The authors looked at interventions at the individual, community and societal level among children aged 0-18 years. The included interventions were aimed to prevent, treat or improve obesity-related behaviours. Specifically, community-level interventions were defined as group-based health promotion, education, advice, counselling or subsidy only interventions, or interventions conducted in a community. Societal level studies were split into two: on one hand, the authors looked at societal-environment level interventions such as ones that included a change in the environment or access to it, and societal-policy level interventions which looked at macro-level policies. Overall, the results from these were mixed, and while the review found some evidence, it was not conclusive evidence. Consequently, the findings suggest that individual, community and societal-level interventions that aim to prevent, treat or improve obesity-related behaviours do not increase socio-economic inequalities.