Drugs interventions for the treatment of obesity in children and adolescents

Childhood obesity can have long-lasting repercussions on the health and well-being of the child, as well as lasting effects into adulthood. Consequently, it is essential to identify interventions which can treat obesity both in the short- and long-term. In the past couple of years, only three drugs have been licensed for the treatment of adult obesity, none of which were licensed for use in children. However, more recently, orlistat was approved by the FDA for people over the age of 12 years. Furthermore, NICE guidance recommends that orlistat should only be used in children under 12 years in exceptional circumstances when severe comorbidities are also present. Consequently, the objective of this systematic review was to assess the effects of drug interventions for the treatment of obesity in children and adolescents.

The included trials “investigated any pharmacological intervention which aimed to treat paediatric obesity, using any of the following intervention versus control sequences, where the same letters indicate direct comparisons.” A total of 21 completed trials met the inclusion criteria and were included. Overall, the trials highlighted “small reductions in BMI and bodyweight change in favour of the drug interventions.” The review found an overall reduction in body mass index of 1.3kg/m² for those in the drug intervention arm.