Effectiveness of preventive school-based obesity interventions in low- and middle-income countries: a systematic review

Childhood obesity is rising globally, with 10% of 5-17 year olds children being overweight. In addition to being associated with a number of chronic conditions, overweight children are increasingly likely to become obese adults. Knowing this, focusing on prevention is urgent. Verstraeten et al. conducted a systematic review to identify the effective pathways to alter the behaviour and/or body mass index in schoolchildren in low- and middle-income countries. The aim of this systematic review was to look at the effect of school-based interventions in low- and middle-income countries aimed at primary prevention of obesity through changes in dietary behaviour.

Out of the 22 included studies that reported useful statistics on the outcomes of interest, 82% had a positive effect on one or more of the outcomes. Interventions that affected both proximal and distal outcomes tended to be multi-component, education-based interventions delivered by teachers and providing additional physical activity sessions or integrated classes about healthy foods, nutrition or physical activity to encourage children to adopt a healthy lifestyle.