Family-Based Interventions in the Prevention and Management of Childhood Overweight and Obesity: An International Review of Best Practices, and a Review of current Irish Interventions

Globally, it is estimated that 10% of children are overweight or have obesity. Among them, 25% are estimated to have obesity. Given the strong correlation between childhood and adulthood overweight and obesity, preventing and treating childhood obesity is a crucial first step. Furthermore, evidence seems to point towards the fact that prevention and treatment interventions are most efficient during childhood given that children are still growing in height, hence a possibility for them to decrease in adiposity without reducing energy intake. Solutions should be personalised and multi-factorial. Identified as a central actor in the treatment of childhood obesity, the aim of this review is “to identify current family-based best practice internationally for the prevention and treatment of childhood overweight and obesity and to examine current Irish Programmes so that best practice recommendations can be drawn up.”

Studied interventions include:

- Family-based interventions or school-based interventions with parental involvement
- Children aged <14 years who are overweight and obese and their families
- The target populations were children, parents, teachers and a combination of these
- Any intervention that aimed at preventing and treating obesity in childhood was considered for inclusion. Physical activity, dietary behavioural problem solving, family-therapy and multi-component interventions were included.

Through the inclusion of examples of current Irish interventions, EU approaches as well as other international examples, the authors develop a set of recommendations for the development of family-based interventions for the prevention and treatment of childhood obesity.