Interventions for treating obesity in children

Based on the International Obesity Taskforce definition of paediatric overweight and obesity, “the worldwide prevalence of overweight (including obesity) in children and young people aged 5-17 years is approximately 10% with that of obesity alone being 2-3%.” In addition to having severe physical health repercussions, childhood obesity is also known to have a significant impact on psychosocial health. Treating childhood obesity should therefore be a priority given the significant short- and long-term repercussions it has. While the primary goal of treatment is the same between adults and children, the goal of it and “recommended mode of intervention is variable and dependent on the child’s age and initial level of overweight among other considerations.” The objective of this review was “to assess the efficacy of a range of interventions designed to treat obesity in children and adolescents, specifically the evaluation of any combination of lifestyle, drug or surgical interventions, compared with any other combination of these interventions or no treatment.”

A total of 64 randomised controlled trials were included in this review, looking at different lifestyle, drug and surgical interventions. Overall, most studies reported beneficial effects of the intervention on adiposity from baseline to end of intervention or follow-up. Furthermore, the review seems to show that “family-based, lifestyle interventions with a behavioural programme aimed at changing diet and physical activity thinking patterns provide significant and clinically meaningful decrease in overweight in both children and adolescents, compared to standard care or self-help in the short- and the long-term.”