Systematic review of the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of weight management schemes for the under fives: a short report

Following global trends, childhood overweight and obesity is increasing in the UK. A number of systematic reviews have indicated that “the roots of adult obesity lie in the preschool years.” Additionally, an increasing number of factors that increase the risk of a child becoming overweight or obese by the age of five have been identified. Consequently, this systematic review aimed “to search for, review and synthesise studies of the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of weight management schemes for the under fives.”

Overall, the search produced 1874 titles and ultimately, 22 articles were included in the systematic review. However, no trials “addressing the issue of treating obesity or evidence of cost-effectiveness studies in the under fives’ population were found.” Despite the lack of conclusive results, we should continue to promote messages focusing “on the theoretical principle of balancing food intake and energy expenditure should continue to drive interventions.” A number of future research priorities have been established, including the need to conduct further randomised controlled trials with long-term follow-up targeting preschool children.