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THE COMMUNITY LEVEL PREVENTION OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY

ОБЩЕСТВЕННЫЙ УРОВЕНЬ ПРОФИЛАКТИКИ ДЕТСКОГО ОЖИРЕНИЯ

В статье рассматривается общественный уровень профилактики детского ожирения. Характеризуются меры, принимаемые Всемирной организацией здравоохранения и Республикой Беларусь в области борьбы с детским ожирением. Подчеркивается важность законодательных ограничений рекламы продуктов питания, способствующих развитию ожирения у детей, а также увеличения социальной рекламы активного образа жизни.

One of the main problems of the 21st century is the increasing number of overweight and obese people, and this pathology tends to spread not only among adults but also among children. Table 1 shows the dynamics of the number of overweight and / or obese people in the world.

Table 1 – Total number of overweight and / or obese people in the world [1,2]

Age	0-5 years		5-19 years		19 years and over	
Year	1990	2016	1975	2016	1975	2016
Number (million people)	32	41	11	124	100	671

As follows from the data provided the number of obese children between the ages of 5 and 19 has increased worldwide more than 10 times. There is also an increase in the number of obese and overweight children under the age of 5, but to a lesser extent.

This problem is also relevant for Belarus. Thus, in 2015, about 300,000 persons had excess body weight or were obese. Screening data show that 5.7 per cent of Minsk pre-school children had overweight bodys and 4.6 per cent were obese. This figure is higher among school-age children. Thus, 18.6 per cent of schoolchildren are overweight and 9.6 per cent are obese [3].

In the 21st century, thanks to the development of science like medicine, many causes of obesity are already known. In particular, they include low levels of physical activity, endocrine diseases, central nervous system pathologies, etc. Childhood obesity can affect virtually all organ systems and can cause diseases such as hypertension, dyslipidemia, diabetes, etc. Therefore, it is important to create new methods for the prevention and treatment of this pathology.

Prevention is now seen as the best way to stop the growing global spread of childhood obesity. Despite the seeming attractiveness of prevention, today there is a limited amount of data on the most effective means of preventing the development of obesity in children. In order for the effectiveness of prevention to be higher, it must be multilevel and measures must be taken at the individual, household, institutional, and community levels.

Without denying the importance of the complexity of prevention measures and taking into account the potential of measures taken by society and states, we consider the community level of prevention of childhood obesity to be one of the most effective and to be a subject to more detailed research.

The community level of childhood obesity prevention includes actions by society, international organizations, in particular the World Health Organization (hereinafter - WHO), and different states.

The WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health was adopted by the World Health Assembly on 22 May 2004. It includes measures to support healthy eating and regular physical activity. WHO has also developed the Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2013-2020. It was aimed at stabilizing the global rate of obesity at its 2010 level [4].

Since there is no consensus in the world on the most productive methods of preventing childhood obesity, in 2014, in order to systematize the opinions of experts from all over the world and create a unified strategy to regulate this problem, the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity was established. As the problem of childhood obesity is not exclusively medical, this Commission was assisted by two working groups. One of them researched all the data on the prevention and treatment of childhood obesity. The other developed the methods for effective monitoring and testing of results on this problem. Thanks to the joint work of the groups, in 2016 the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity presented The Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity, which contains six recommendations for tackling the conditions conducive to obesity and critical periods of life to tackle childhood obesity [5].

In 2019, WHO issued Guidelines on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep for children under 5 years of age. Recommendations are grouped for children under 1 year old, 1 to 2 years old and 3 to 4 years old and relate to physical activity, sleep duration, periods of limited mobility (for example, in bassinets, strollers, child seats). It is noteworthy that the Guidelines

specify specific limits on the amount of time children can spend in front of TV screens and other devices [6].

Based on the research carried out, WHO adopted Guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour in 2020. These Recommendations are also developed for children aged 5 to 18 years. They relate primarily to the issues of their physical activity. Due to the lack of research, this document does not contain specific recommendations regarding the duration of sedentary periods, especially leisure time in front of a TV screen, computer or other device, which requires further clarification [7].

Of course, measures to combat childhood obesity taken at the level of international organizations are not enough to achieve the set goals. In this regard, it is important to take measures of the community level for the prevention of childhood obesity, taken by specific states, in particular, the Republic of Belarus.

So, in 2016-2020. in the Republic of Belarus there was a State program "People's health and demographic security of the Republic of Belarus", approved by the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 200 dated March 14, 2016. This State Program provided for activities to promote a healthy lifestyle and nutrition, including children. Currently, by the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus dated January 19, 2021, No. 28, a new State program "People's health and demographic security" for 2021–2025 was approved. One of the objectives of subprogram 2 "Prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases" of this state program is to reduce the impact of risk factors for non-communicable diseases by creating a unified preventive environment. This task also includes the prevention of childhood obesity. Within the framework of this subprogram, the main direction in the fight against childhood obesity is information and educational work with the population. And if the republican Internet portal "Healthy People" [8] is used to promote a healthy lifestyle and proper nutrition for children, then the resources of social advertising are not used enough.

Moreover, in the Republic of Belarus there are no restrictions on advertising of unhealthy foods. The Law of May 10, 2007 No. 225-3 "On Advertising" in the Republic of Belarus establishes certain restrictions on advertising in the media in relation to children. Thus, Article 11 of this Law prohibits interruptions by advertising or combination with advertising, including advertising in the form of overlays, including in the form of "creeping line", children's programs and programs lasting less than 15 minutes. However, educational programs with a duration of 15 minutes or more, as well as children's feature films, may be interrupted by advertising immediately at the beginning and before the end of the program for a period not exceeding 60 seconds. The object of advertising and the content of such advertising must correspond to the characteristics of a child and teenage audience.

We believe that these restrictions are not sufficient and the Republic of Belarus should continue to improve its legislation in the field of advertising, based on the experience of other states.

For example, in the United States, studies have shown that children under the age of 8 are unable to critically analyze television advertisements, and therefore it is believed that children may develop unhealthy eating habits. For this reason, the American Psychological Association is proposing to ban advertising directed at children under 8 years of age. At the moment, advertising for children under the age of 12 for goods and services ordered by phone is prohibited in the United States. In addition, the United States has a special agency for the control of children's advertising (the Children's Advertising Review Unit - (CARU)), which monitors many television advertising messages, including viewing print ads and advertisements on the Internet.

Existing in Australia children's television standards prohibit advertisements in preschool programs and products that have been officially declared unsafe by the health service or other authorized agency.

In the UK, in addition to the already existing restrictions on advertising on children's programs as part of the anti-obesity program, from April 2022 it will ban "buy one, get a second

free” promotions for foods high in fat, sugar and salt, and will also ban advertising of such products on TV and on the Internet until 21.00, will limit the placement of advertising campaigns for unhealthy foods.

It should be noted that there is no common European opinion regarding advertising for children. The level of regulation of advertising to children differs from country to country. Therefore, in order to create a unified advertising policy in the fight against childhood obesity, WHO developed the Set of Recommendations on the Marketing of Foods and Non-alcoholic Beverages to Children, which was approved in May 2010 at the 63rd World Health Assembly. This set of recommendations is intended to provide guidance for developing new and / or strengthening existing food marketing communications policies to reduce the impact on children of advertising for foods high in saturated fat, trans fatty acids, sugar or salt.

Thus, the prevention of childhood obesity and related diseases should be carried out in a comprehensive manner with the participation of specialists in various fields and the mandatory implementation of measures at the state level. In particular, the Republic of Belarus should introduce restrictions on advertising of food products that contribute to the development of obesity in children, as well as intensify social advertising of an active lifestyle.

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