Translation of Research to Practice: Portion Interventions with Children
Leigh Small, PhD, RN, CPNP-PC, FNAP
Arizona State University College of Nursing and Health Innovation
Heather Lane, Linda Vaughan, Bernadette Melyn, Danielle McBurnett

Problem and Need for Change:
There has been an increase in the number of overweight and obese children in recent years and studies indicate that children’s lives may be shortened as a result of this. Currently, one in five U.S. preschool children has a body mass index > 85th percentile. Evidence suggests that 4-6-year-old children are affected by the amount of food they are served, with larger portions of food served resulting in greater dietary intake.

Appraisal of Evidence:
A thorough literature search guided by the PRISMA guidelines was conducted using multiple databases. Evidence showed the positive effect of portion sizes on the energy intake of children in well-controlled environments. Additionally, the ability of adults to accurately estimate portion size improved following education/training.

Strategy for Change:
A pilot study was conducted to determine the effects of a parent-focused portion education intervention on the amount of food parents serve and their preschooler’s dietary intake in the home environment. The pilot study was based on the information, motivation, and behavior framework for behavior change.

Practice Change Evaluated:
The simple intervention consisted of age-appropriate child nutrition information, practical tips to serve appropriate portion sizes for preschool children and specific skill-building recommendations. This intervention was designed such that it could be carried out in multiple settings.

Design to Evaluate Outcomes:
A single-group pre-/post-test design was used with 45 mothers and their 4-6-year-old children.

Results of Impact of Change:
The average calories mothers served and the average calories children ate significantly decreased which was the direct result of decreased fat, saturated fat and carbohydrate served and eaten.
Recommended for Adoption:
This preliminary evidence supports the effectiveness of a simple, portion education and skills-building program directed at parents of preschool children. Further investigation using a randomized control study design with a larger sample is needed to appreciate the full effects of this intervention.

Lessons Learned:
Interacting with parents in different settings to test a portion-education intervention provided many challenges from which participants can learn. Given the positive findings and childhood obesity prevalence, translation of this evidence is needed.

Bibliography:


