

Editorial

The Santa Body Size Index (SBSI)

In the light of the obesity epidemic, the editor sees the need to develop ways of identifying indicators for overweight and obesity in the population of Santa Clauses. The work has been rather hectic and complex, but a few results announced here may lead the reader in the right direction when pursuing this research and hopefully inspire a new monitoring system. *In vivo* research or IRL (in real life) research is not included here.

Massive Santa cohort

Seeking pictures of Santa Claus on Google gives more than 437 000 Santa entries, so the effort needed to identify a proper representative sample is rather heavy. It is as yet unclear what identifying factors make any particular Santa most relevant when searching on Google. Therefore, the Santa Body Size Index (SBSI) is used here as a suggested epidemiological tool.

The SBSI

The two measures that are used on two-dimensional pictures of Santas are waist width as indicated by the belt, and height. The tape measure is, due to its flexibility, the most valuable instrument for evaluating SBSI. The waist width is not a circumference measure, but instead uses the belt. The tape is applied to the upper lining of the belt and used to measure its width along the usually curved line that the belt forms.

Height is sometimes simpler, and here also the flexibility of the tape measure is an asset, since many pictures show a sitting Santa, or else a Santa squatting or bent over due to heavy Christmas gifts on his back. The index is calculated by dividing the waist width by the height.

Padding problems

The clothing of Santa does sometimes hinder SBSI measurement. Long wide sleeves can make it difficult to know where the waist width ends. Furthermore, padding has sometimes been used when producing the pictures, to make Santa look more impressive (obese) than he really is. Sometimes even high heels have been used, giving a false impression of a lower SBSI.

Gender issues

A search for Mrs Santa Claus on Google suggests a mere 55 200 pictures, showing an unfortunate large gender gap.

However, several pictures of Mrs Santa show a rather undressed version of this good lady which makes SBSI measurement easier. The heat given off by these evidently thermogenic Mrs Santas at home at the North Pole, and by the impact of undressed Mrs Santas on observers in the vicinity, is offered as an additional explanation for current data on the shrinking Arctic ice-cap.

Baby Santas

The whole population of baby Santas needs to be compared with specific reference values from breastfed Santa babies. Figure 1 shows an example of breastfed Santa, at 6 months of age. As the picture illustrates, the sleeve hides the width of the waist and the height is difficult to identify in this sitting baby. The apple cheeks can give some guidance on level of overweight, but could be caused by vigorous suckling, so provides no safe conclusions.

Results and risks of Santa as a role model

A ball-park figure of SBSI = 0.7 is suggested as cut-off for santobesity. This cut-off was derived through ocular examination performed by 10 test individuals,



Fig. 1 Exclusively breastfed baby Santa, 6 months of age.

identifying depicted Santas as normal weight, overweight or obese. After performing around 200 SBSI measurements on male adult Santa pictures, the mean SBSI comes out as 0.8 with a standard deviation of 0.5. The convention of obese Santas may lead to an unreasonable pressure on daddy Santas to try to adapt to this role model, at least during the festive season. Focus group interviews should be performed with these fathers, in order properly to advise them in preparation for their Christmas performance. Cushions can be offered as a salutogenic alternative to gorging on stuffing, mince pies and Christmas pudding. The findings on men do not embrace women. Indeed, the consequences of nude Mrs Santa as a role model could be that mummy Santas wear too few clothes and so are at risk of Yuletide hypothermia.

Time trends issue

A simple Google search for identifying pictures is not a good way to go about time trend analysis of Santa's body size, because most pictures found here do not provide any time indication, and so far much historical material is

missing on Google. Suggestions for identifying other sources of pictures are most welcome. A solid monitoring system needs to be developed.

GloboSanta

Many cultures around the world do not celebrate Christmas, but this does not mean they have no knowledge of Santa and so the global relevance of the SBSI is unquestioned. Furthermore, the world's most well-known brand, Coca-Cola, has announced that Santa is visiting every home, which will enhance Santa recognition in all continents.

Conclusions

The severity of Santa's obesity needs further exploration. The cut-offs of SBSI indicating overweight and obesity in Santas need to be validated. The lack of data on the female Santa is worrying.

Season's Greetings and a Happy New Year!

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In this issue

Food availability and access: central issues for public health nutrition

Access to healthy food is an important determinant of optimal nutrition status in any context, and remains an important focus for public health nutrition practice and research. Because food access is influenced by many factors (such as availability, affordability and consumer knowledge, to name a few), measurement and analysis of food accessibility is an ongoing challenge. In this issue, Anderson *et al.*¹ present a paper identifying key food items to include in a tool designed to assess food access, including consideration of the vexing issue of defining what is 'healthy food'.

Supermarkets continue to be major access points for food in many countries and have an important influence on food and nutrient availability. Hamilton *et al.*² report on an analysis of supermarket sales data in New Zealand as a basis for assessing food and nutrient availability. Results suggest this data source has considerable utility for the measurement and monitoring of food purchasing and consumption trends.

Naska *et al.*³ report on analysis of different approaches to estimate daily energy and nutrient availability based on household budget survey data from the European-based DAFNE project.

In a study of 3931 female Japanese dietetic students, Murakami *et al.*⁴ provide evidence that the affordability of food and nutrients affects actual consumption, but that this effect is difficult to interpret in terms of desirable effects on nutrient intake and body composition.

More fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables remain at the forefront of dietary guidance worldwide, and research that explores the determinants of consumption and interventions that promote consumption are critical in order to effectively achieve desirable fruit and vegetable intakes. Two papers in this issue address a number of determinants of fruit and vegetable consumption. Gallaway *et al.*⁵ report on a study of 473 boy scouts in the USA to identify psychosocial and demographic predictors of fruit, juice and vegetable consumption. Morland and Filomena⁶ report