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The prevalence and economic burden of obesity in Hungary

Rurik. Imre^{1,2}, Ungvári. Tímea², Semánová Csilla³ and Iski Gabriella²
¹Hungarian Society of Nutrition, Budapest, Hungary,
²University of Debrecen, Debrecen, Hungary and
³University of Debrecen, Debrecen, Slovakia

Abstract

Introduction

The prevalence of obesity is growing continuously worldwide, even in Hungary. Since 1988, when the first professional wide-range evaluation was performed, only limited data were available. There were no reports of health care expenses related to obesity.

Methods

Anthropometric parameters were measured, presence of metabolic diseases were questioned in primary&community care settings. Data were compared with previous data from 1988.

Yearly data of the Hungarian National Health Insurance Fund Administration (NHIFA) were collected, regarding finances of secondary care, hospital services and health insurance reimbursement for medications, based on selected morbidities linked to obesity.

Results

Data of 0.55 percent of the population above 18 year were registered in all geographical regions of Hungary (43,287 persons; 17,901 males and 25,386 females), close to the proper national representativeness.

The overall prevalence rate of overweight among men was 40%, while obesity 32%, by women both was close to 32%. In the different age groups of men, the prevalence of overweight and obesity was: 18–34 y = 32.7% and 18.2%, between 35–59 y = 40.1% and 34.4%, over 60 y = 43.5% and 38.8%. Among women, in the same age categories were: 19.6% and 5.7%, 36.8% and 38.7%, 36.5% and 39.7%. Data of BMIs and waist-circumference were presented according to age, by decades and by type of residency as well. The highest ratio of overweight was registered among men with the highest educational level, while highest ratio of obesity among women having the lowest education. Obesity according to BMI and abdominal obesity was the highest in the villages, especially among females. Registered metabolic morbidities were strongly correlated with BMIs and both were inversely related to the level of urbanization.

The estimated total public health expenditures were 58,986 Million HUF (190.3 Million EUR) and the financial contribution of patients was calculated as 25,316 Million HUF (82 Million EUR). These data represent 9,3 % of the whole national health services budget (908,011 Million HUF - 2929 Million EUR) and 30 % of the whole drug-reimbursement budget (296,024 Million HUF - 955 Million EUR).

Conclusions

Over the previous decades, the ratio of the overweight and even the obese persons increased significantly, it was most prominent among males, mainly in younger generation.

Expenditures for all obesity related pathologies could be estimated between 0.5–1 % of the national GDP.

Obesity means a serious medical, public health and economic problem, requires higher public and political awareness.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest