Impact of COVID-19 on Families with Overweight/Obesity: Data from the PLAN with Families Study

Moursi N., Schechtman K., Eneli I., Epstein L., Wilfley D., Cook S.

Introduction
• People who have overweight/obesity are at increased risk for serious health conditions.
• Recently, there is converging evidence that obesity is a risk factor for poor COVID-19 outcomes.1-3
• The PLAN with Families study – a randomized, controlled trial of Family-Based Behavioral Treatment (FBBT) – conducted a survey to assess the prevalence of COVID-19 in active participants.
• Additionally, we examined the impact the pandemic as a whole has had on participating families’ lives.

Methods
• Sent the COVID-19 Exposure and Impact Survey (CEFIS) via email
• Questions directed towards the target parent about their family
• 131 parent-child dyads responded
• Parent (PP) with a BMI over 25
• Child with a BMI above the 85th percentile
• Exposure and impact scores were calculated using CEFIS scoring instructions

Results

Demographics
• The 131 PPs were 88% female, 75% White (Non-Hispanic), with a majority (55%) between the ages of 40 and 50 years old
• The median annual household income group was $80,000 - $89,999.

Prevalence
• 5% of responding PPs COVID-19 positive
• 3% of participants in the total cohort COVID-19 positive
• No responding PPs reported severe outcomes
• 1 PP in total cohort reported admission to the ICU.
• Out of the 17 family members with COVID-19, 5 (25%) reportedly passed away. In the total enrolled cohort, there have been no deaths

Exposure Score Distribution
• A higher exposure score signifies a higher overall family exposure to COVID-19.
• A majority (82%) reported moderate exposure.
• No PPs scored lower than 3

Impact Score Distribution per Item
• A higher impact score signifies that the pandemic had a higher negative impact on PPs and their families.
• 65% of PPs reported negative effects on their exercise habits, 68% on their sleeping habits, and 61% on their eating habits.
• 75% of PPs reported a negative impact on their mood and anxiety.
• Potential issue with wording of the fourth, fifth, and sixth items since many PPs responded “N/A”
• Over 45% of PPs reported that the pandemic made parenting and getting along with family a little or a lot better

Conclusions
Healthy eating, regular sleep, and routine exercise are crucial behaviors for weight loss, yet a majority of PPs (>60%) reported those same behavioral habits being a little or a lot worse. Families with overweight/obesity might have a difficult time sustaining healthy behaviors and weight management during this pandemic. It is possible that individuals enrolled in a weight management program may find their lives increasingly distressing as they attempt to make changes in their health behaviors, attempt to abide by COVID-19 safety regulations, and suffer the negative social and economic effects of the pandemic.