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Double burden of obesity and malnutrition in Montenegro –current status and challenges

Childhood obesity is an emerging public health problem that requires effective prevention and treatment programs. The national prevalence of child overweight/obesity in Montenegro has increased by one third in the last decade. Several studies including antrophometric measurements has been performed during the last decade.

Montenegro joined COSI (Childhood Obesity Surveilance Initiative) program in 2016. In this research 3443 children were measured. The obtained results on obesity prevalence show that every fifth boy and every tenth girl are obese, while the prevalence rate of overweight was almost the same in boys and girls. Comparing with WHO charts for boys and girls, 14 children (9 boys, 5 girls) had body weight lower than 3rd percentile which suggests that they were malnourished.

Last round of Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in Montenegro was conducted in 2013. Percentage of children under age 5 who are above two standard deviations of the median weight for height of the WHO standard was 22,3%. Underweight prevalence - moderate and severe included 1%, while severe underweight prevalence included 0.1% of children. Stunting prevalence moderate and severe together included 9.4%, while severe stunting prevalence alone included 5.6% of children. Wasting prevalence moderate and severe included 2.8%, while severe wasting prevalence alone included 1,2% of children.

Living Standards Measurement Survey, LSMS, type - National Health Survey of the population of Montenegro was conducted in 2008. This research include anthropometric measurements of weight and height of respondents, and the results were compared with respect to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States) standards. Results of this study showed that 3.8% of children and adolescents aged 7-19 years in Montenegro were underweight, while a total of 21.2% were overweight and obese. The same survey showed that according to the body mass index (BMI) more than half of respondents older than 20 years, was overweight 40% and obese 15.1%, while 2.1% were underweight in relation to the WHO standards.

Nowdays, using stable isotope labeled water it is possible to accurately determine the amount of fat/fat free mass in the total body mass and thereby reliably determine the total energy consumption of the organism which is valuable research method to increase knowledge of metabolic disturbances in malnutrition and to evaluate the effects of interventions. Despite the many advantages, methods using stable isotopes were not represented so far in Montenegro, even though they have been in use for more than thirty years in different parts of the world. Institute of Public Health with support of IAEA and partner institutions in coming period is planning to to use advantages of stable isotope techniques in population research in order to obtain necessary data to improve public health interventions and consequently reduce morbidity and mortality from the double burden of obesity and malnutrition in the population.

Key words: childhood obesity, COSI, LSMS, MICS, stable isotopes

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