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Latino Parents' Perceptions of Weight Terminology Used in Pediatric Weight Counseling

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Abstract

Objective

To identify which English and Spanish terms Latino parents consider motivating, as well as culturally and linguistically appropriate, for provider use during weight counseling of overweight and obese Latino youth.

Methods

Latino parent perceptions of common Spanish and English terms for overweight were discussed with 54 parents in 6 focus groups (3 English, 3 Spanish). Atlas.ti software was

used for qualitative analysis. An initial codebook was used to code passages for English and Spanish terminology separately. Subsequent changes to the coded passages and creation of new codes were made by team consensus.

Results

“Demasiado peso para su salud” (too much weight for his/her health) was the only phrase for excess weight that was consistently identified as motivating and inoffensive by Spanish-speaking parents. “Sobrepeso” (overweight), a commonly used term among health care providers, was motivating to some parents but offensive to others. English-speaking parents had mixed reactions to “unhealthy weight,” “weight problem,” and “overweight,” finding them motivating, confusing, or insulting. Parents found “fat” “gordo” and “obese” “obeso” consistently offensive. Most participants found growth charts and the term “BMI” confusing. Parents consistently reported that providers could enhance motivation and avoid offending families by linking a child's weight to health risks, particularly diabetes.

Conclusions

“Demasiado peso para su salud” (too much weight for his/her health) was motivating to many Spanish-speaking Latino parents. Among English-speaking Latino parents, no single English term emerged as motivating, well-understood, and inoffensive. Linking a child's excess weight with increased health risks was motivating and valuable to many parents regardless of language spoken.



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Keywords

Latina/latino; obesity; overweight children; parental perceptions; weight counseling

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