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TITOLO: Motivational Interviewing to Treat Overweight Children: 24-Month Follow-Up of a Randomized Controlled Trial

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Motivational Interviewing to Treat Overweight Children: 24-Month Follow-Up of a Randomized Controlled Trial

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BACKGROUND: Pediatrician-led motivational interviewing can be an effective way of controlling BMI in overweight children in the short term. Its long-term efficacy is unknown. The primary aim was to determine whether the short-term (12-month) impact of family pediatrician-led motivational interviews on the BMI of overweight children could be sustained in the long term (24 months), in the absence of any other intervention. **abstract**

METHODS: Children were recruited in 2011 by family pediatricians working in the province of Reggio Emilia, Italy, and randomly allocated to receive either 5 interviews delivered over a 12-month period or usual care. Eligible participants were all 4- to 7-year-old overweight children resident in the province of Reggio Emilia who had been receiving care from the pediatrician for ≥ 12 months. The primary outcome of this study was individual variation in BMI between the baseline visit and the 24-month follow-up, assessed by pediatricians not blinded to treatment group allocation.

RESULTS: Of 419 eligible families, 372 (89%) participated; 187 children were randomized to receive intervention and 185 to usual care. Ninety-five percent of the children attended the 12-month follow-up, and 91% attended the 24-month follow-up. After the 12-month intervention period, BMI in the intervention group increased less than in the control group (0.46 and 0.78, respectively; difference -0.32 ; $P = .005$). At the 24-month follow-up, the difference had disappeared (1.52 and 1.56, respectively; difference -0.04 ; $P = .986$).

CONCLUSIONS: The intervention lost its effectiveness within 1 year of cessation. Sustainable boosters are required for weight control and obesity prevention.

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Drs Broccoli, Fabbri, Ferrari, Montagna, Panza, and Candela and Ms Bonvicini contributed to study design; Dr Broccoli and Ms Bonvicini coordinated data collection and carried out the analyses; Drs Broccoli and Fabbri and Ms Bonvicini supervised data collection; Dr Broccoli drafted the Methods, Results, and Discussion of the manuscript; Dr Davoli designed the study and coordinated and supervised the pediatricians; Ms Bonvicini drafted the Introduction of the manuscript; Drs Davoli, Fabbri, and Candela and Ms Bonvicini reviewed and revised the manuscript; Dr Fabbri analyzed the results; Drs Ferrari and Montagna coordinated and supervised the recruitment phase; Dr Ferrari assisted with training pediatricians and carrying out the study; Dr Montagna assisted with carrying out the study; Drs Montagna (pediatrician component), Pinotti (Local Health Unit component), and Bellocchio (Local Health Unit component) directed the pediatricians' involvement; Drs Panza, Pinotti, and Bellocchio contributed to study development; Dr Panza conducted the preliminary systematic review of the interventions; Drs Storani and Tamelli contributed to intervention design and trained the pediatricians; Dr Candela developed the study; Dr Rossi planned the data analysis, drafted the outline of the manuscript, and critically reviewed and revised the manuscript; and all authors approved the final manuscript as submitted.

WHAT'S KNOWN ON THIS SUBJECT: Childhood obesity can seriously affect health outcomes. Motivational interviewing in primary care has been shown to be effective in BMI control, but previous studies measured its efficacy only just after the intervention ended. There are no available long-term follow-up data.

WHAT THIS STUDY ADDS: Despite very encouraging initial results, 12 months after intervention ended, children who received motivational interviewing lost all the advantage in terms of BMI, compared with the control group.

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