

Epidemiology in the news homework



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Epidemiology in the News Homework Clinicians and medical researchers make the assumption that conflicting nutrition and health messages are conveyed through different media platforms, thus negatively influencing the public's comprehension of healthy behavior. The information transmitted by mainstream media could also negate scientific research, further misleading members of the public who rarely bother to get credible information about a given health concern. In this case, the health issue under consideration is childhood obesity, and parental influence in reducing or promoting this critical health concern.

The journal article selected for this study is titled "Children's eating attitudes and behaviour: a study of the modelling and control theories of parental influence." The experiential study by Ogden and Brown compares the control theories and models of parents' influence on the feeding habits and behavior of children. This study particularly focuses on kid's consumption of snacks. To get conclusive results, the authors designed questionnaires meant to analyze obesity risk factors like eating motivations, snack intake, as well as, body dissatisfaction (Brown & Ogden, 2004). Participating parents were also required to fill in questionnaires with additional aspects relating to the effort they make in regulating their children's feeding behavior. Another aspect studied during the study, was the parents' tendency to use food as an instrument for kids' behavior regulation. The study results indicated that there is a significant connection between parents and children, in consideration of snack consumption, feeding motivations and, hence childhood obesity. This article, therefore, places emphasis on the imperative role of modelling that parents should play. All the same, results from the study indicate that negative parental influence is not the sole determinant of

obesity, since it must be coupled with other factors like sedentary child lifestyles, lack of exercise and excessive consumption of junk food among other things. The study findings also indicate that a constructive parental model is more effective in facilitating transformation and regulation of obesity, than parents' attempts to compel children to reduce their food intake (Brown & Ogden, 2004).

An article by fine, titled “ Junk food doesn't make kids fat - junk parents do” posted in an Australian blog The Punch, exaggerates these research findings to an extent of misleading the public. For instance, the article discredits the notion that advertising of food products during children's television programs is a contributory factor to childhood obesity. This is shown in the author's statement, countering researchers' assertion that, children in the contemporary environment spend all their time watching television, surfing the internet and playing video games. The author's position is that kids are not submissive pop culture consumers. The news article is also quick to discredit positive parental modelling proposed in the journal article. Instead the author claims that, it is parents' failure to declare their stand regarding children's feeding habits, which leads to failure in the attempt to curb childhood obesity. The article overlooks the crucial aspect of curbing childhood obesity, instead using the subject to campaign against the idea of banning junk food advertisements. The news article also seems to advocate for children's exposure to television watching and other marketing platforms, based on the argument that it is the children's and not parents' responsibility to sieve through all the information conveyed and determine the most suitable. Apparently, failure to do this will lead to the children's development into impressionable and naïve young adults. This is clearly, a

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further negation of the positive parental modelling concept suggested in the journal article.

Reference

Brown, R., & Ogden, J. (2004). Childrens eating attitudes and behaviour: a study of the modelling and control theories of parental influence. *Health Education Research Theory & Practice*, 19(3): 261-271.