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Challenges in Clinician Communication in the School Setting: Culturally Sensitive BMI Screening

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The Role of Culture in the Context of School-Based BMI Screening

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Obesity and Ethnic Minority Children

There are significant racial and ethnic disparities in obesity prevalence among children in the United States.

School-Based BMI Screening: Advantages

- Schools are logical measurement sites because they reach virtually all youth.
- There is a tradition of schools communicating with parents about health-related matters.

BMI = body mass index

School-Based BMI Screening: Disadvantages

- Most school-based screening programs do not meet all of the American Academy of Pediatrics criteria
- Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness have not been established through research
- Lack of resources for treatment
- Potential stigmatization of students

Parental Recognition of Their Children's Weight Status

- Most parents, regardless of racial or ethnic group, fail to accurately identify the weight status of their overweight children.

Ethnic Minority Women and Weight Perception

- Less stigma among African American women about overweight status
- Protective against eating disorders
- Intergenerational transmission of health behaviors and related weight status

The PEN-3 Model

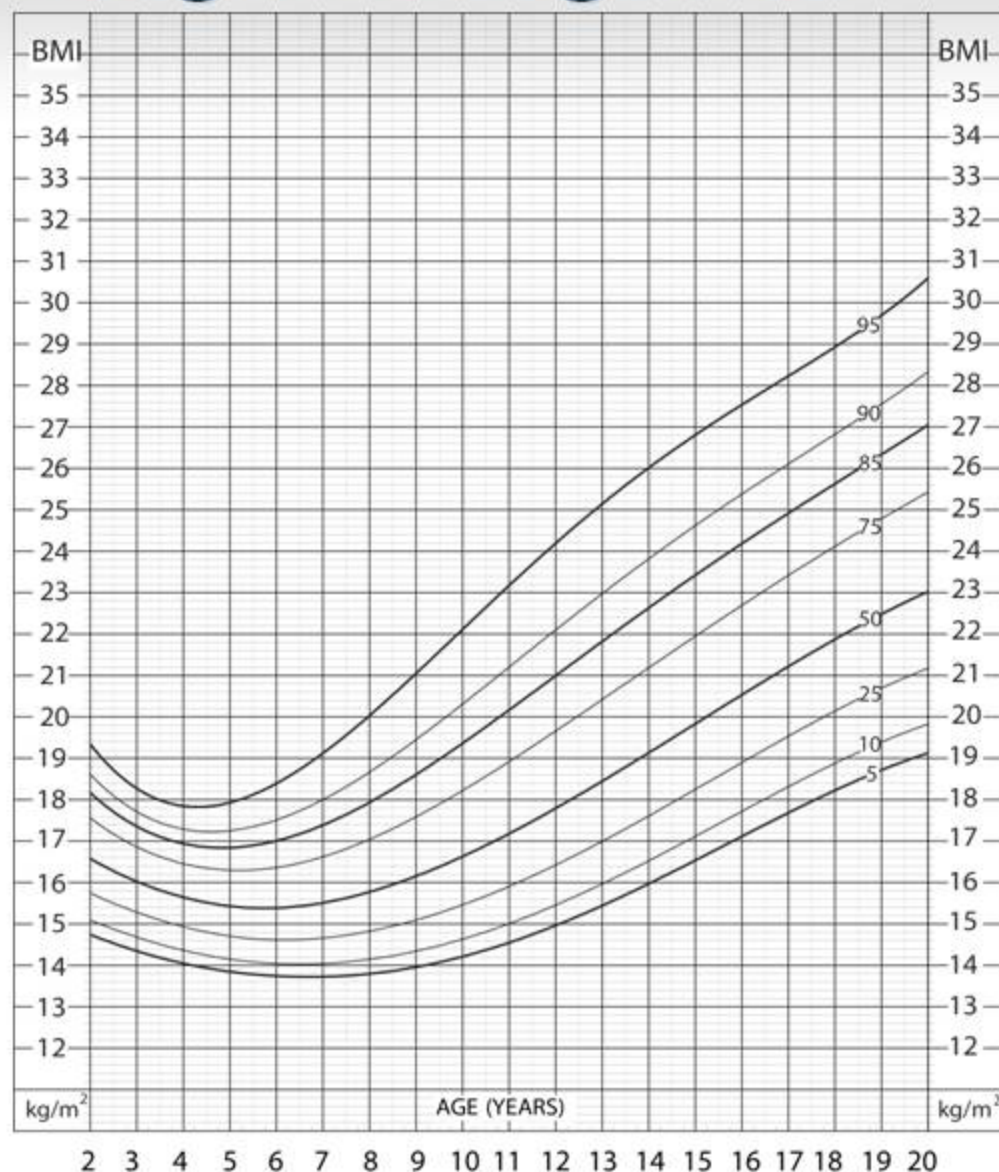
- Cultural identity
 - Person, extended family, neighborhood
- Relationships and expectations
 - Perceptions, enablers, nurturers
- Cultural empowerment
 - Positive, existential, negative

What Would a Culturally Sensitive BMI Reporting Program Look Like?

- Rooted in the context of understanding the myriad cultures and communities involved
 - Local
 - School
 - Generational
 - Racial and ethnic

"Parents need to be partners with the schools and with their children"

Weight Categories



Obese	$\geq 95^{\text{th}}$ percentile
Overweight	85^{th} to 94^{th} percentiles
Healthy weight	5^{th} to $< 85^{\text{th}}$ percentiles
Underweight	$< 5^{\text{th}}$ percentile

CDC. Available at:

http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/childrens_bmi/about_childrens_bmi.html.

Not an Individual Problem

Obesity is a systemic problem that needs systemic solutions.

Avoid the Risk of Overgeneralizing

- Ethnic identity
- What is at stake?
- The illness narrative
- Psychosocial stresses
- Influence of culture on clinical relationships
- Translating and interpreting

Schools and Obesity

- Cooking classes
- Mandatory physical activity
- Health screenings

Provide these resources in a culturally sensitive manner

Key Points

- Plan for private and sensitive collection of data
- Provide recommendations for healthy eating and physical activity connected to local resources
- Understand the cultures in the community

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