NCHS Dataline

Rates of obesity continued to increase dramatically during the late 1990s for Americans of all ages, with nearly one-third of all adults classified as obese, according to new data from the 1999–2000 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey released by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).[1,2] In other developments, NCHS announced the latest cooperative agreements under the program for Centers for Excellence in Health Statistics, and NCHS's Jane Gentleman was awarded the first Janet L. Norwood Award for outstanding achievement by a woman in statistical sciences.

OBESITY STILL ON THE RISE, NEW DATA SHOW

Data from the 1999–2000 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey show that 31% of adults 20 years of age and older—nearly 59 million people—have a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or greater, compared with 23% in 1994. Meanwhile, the percent of children who are overweight (defined as BMI-for-age at or above the 95th percentile of the CDC growth charts) also continues to increase. Among children and teens ages 6–19, 15% (almost 9 million) are overweight according to the 1999–2000 data, or triple the proportion in 1980.

Survey findings indicate that a higher percentage of adult women (33%) than of adult men (28%) are obese, with the problem greatest among non-Hispanic black women (50%, compared with 40% for Mexican-American women and 30% for non-Hispanic white women). There was practically no difference in obesity levels among men based on race/ethnicity.

In addition, the data on children show:

- More than 10% of preschool children ages 2–5 are overweight, up from 7% in 1994.
- Non-Hispanic black and Mexican-American adolescents ages 12–19 were more likely to be overweight (24%) than non-Hispanic white adolescents (13%).
- Mexican-American children ages 6–11 were more likely to be overweight (24%) than non-Hispanic black children (20%) or non-Hispanic white children (12%).
- Preschool-aged non-Hispanic black children were less likely (8%) than preschool-aged Mexican-American children (11%) or non-Hispanic white children (10%) to be overweight.

The survey findings also pointed to another 15% of children and teens ages 6–19 who are considered at risk of becoming overweight (BMI-for-age from the 85th to the 95th percentiles).

The BMI is a single number that evaluates an individual's weight status in relation to height, calculated as a person's body weight in kilograms divided by the square of his or her height in meters. The BMI is generally used as the first indicator in assessing body fat and has been the most common method of tracking weight problems and obesity among adults. The BMI is more highly correlated with body fat than any other indicator of height and weight. The criterion for obesity is the same for both men and women.

More information on the study is available on the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/nchs. The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey obtains actual measurements of height and weight as part of standardized physical examinations conducted in mobile examination centers with a sample of the nation's civilian, non-institutionalized population. Since 1991, the survey has traveled to 15 locations each year to reach the approximately 5,000 individuals selected to participate.

CENTERS FOR EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH STATISTICS AWARDS FOR FY 2002

CDC, through the Public Health Practice Program Office and NCHS, has announced fiscal year 2002 cooperative agreements under the Centers for Excellence in Health Statistics program to advance the state of the art in collection, analysis, and interpretation of health statistics. The recipients of this year's grants totaling $1.2 million, awarded on September 30, 2002, are the University of Michigan, the Minnesota Department of Health, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Centers for Excellence draw upon multiple disciplines and collaborations with multiple partners to address significant problems in the fields of statistics, health services, and survey research. The Centers are exploring new approaches to enhance the capability of the statistical system to meet the rapidly changing needs of disease surveillance, epidemiologic research, and prevention research. In its fourth year, the pro-

gram is recognized for its role in helping federal programs do a better job of carrying out their missions.

GENTLEMAN FIRST RECIPIENT OF JANET L. NORWOOD AWARD

Jane Gentleman, PhD, Director of the Division of Health Interview Statistics, NCHS, is the first recipient of the Janet L. Norwood Award for outstanding achievement by a woman in statistical services. The Section on Statistical Genetics, Department of Biostatistics, University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health, presented the award to Gentleman on October 4, 2002. Norwood is the former Commissioner of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

As Director of the Division of Health Interview Statistics since 1999, Gentleman directs one of the largest and most far-reaching national health surveys. Prior to this, she was Assistant Director for Analytical Methods with Statistics Canada in Ottawa. She has served as a statistical programmer, professor, researcher, and administrator over the course of her career and is well known for her development of new statistical computing applications.

NCHS Dataline is prepared by Sandra S. Smith, MPH, Public Affairs Officer, National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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