

## **Good practices for improving physical activity in pre-school children: promotion and surveillance.**

S Daris, C Carletti

Health Services Research, Epidemiology and International Health, IRCCS Burlo Garofolo, Trieste, Italy.

### **Introduction**

Sedentary behavior in early childhood may be one of the determinants of overweight and obesity in later life.

### **Aim**

To promote and monitor physical activity in three Italian regions (Friuli Venezia Giulia, Toscana and Puglia) in pre-school children (age 0-5) in close partnership with family paediatricians, local health services, families and communities through:

1. Offering paediatricians a kit of good practices including technical advice and counselling materials (brochure and poster) about physical activity and nutrition in pre-school children.
2. Developing a set of indicators (anthropometrics, diet, physical activity and context) to monitor the results of applying the above-mentioned good practices
3. Suggesting a model of collaboration among all the stakeholders interested in prevention of overweight and obesity.

### **Materials and methods**

A review of the literature allowed to develop a technical document on physical activity in pre-school children. Based on this document, counselling materials and a set of indicators were developed and will be offered to paediatricians for use in their clinical practices. During periodic well baby visits, a sample of paediatricians in the three regions will collect anthropometric data (weight, length-height) and physical activity indicators (daily time watching TV, amount of physical activity in parents and children), and will hand out a brochure to the parents. The software used by paediatricians to gather data was modified accordingly.

### **Results**

1. A document on good practices for physical activity that will be shared by paediatricians in three regions.
2. A brochure and a poster for parents (10 advices: 5 about physical activity).
3. A set of physical activity indicators for monitoring to be tested for at least six months.
4. About 200 paediatricians will probably participated (recruitment in progress).
5. Refresher courses were and will be organized for paediatricians.

### **Discussion**

The project began in May 2007 and will end in May 2009. It represents an opportunity for intersectoral collaboration among all stakeholders (health, education, transport, agriculture, business, local administration, media, NGOs etc). The goal is to standardize the advice health and social workers will give to parents, as well as the indicators used for monitoring. After this pilot test the materials and indicators on physical activities will be offered for extension to the national health system.