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High Prevalence of Obesity Among the Poor in Mexico

To the Editor: The burden of disease in developing countries is multifaceted, and it is now appreciated that obesity, which was once thought to be an exclusively developed-world problem, is increasing worldwide. In 2000, 300 million people worldwide were overweight and 200 million people were obese; the number of obese people worldwide is expected to double by 2030. In the developed world, an increasing prevalence of overweight and obesity is characterized by the development of obesity-related comorbidities, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and certain cancers. The increased prevalence and magnitude of overweight and obesity in developing countries have raised concerns about the development of obesity-related comorbidities in these countries.

Methods

We conducted a nationally representative, cross-sectional sample survey of the Mexican population. The Mexican Ministry of Health conducted a nationally representative sample survey in 2000. In 2000, there were 500902 individuals in 16408 households in the 2000 survey, and 115224 individuals in 9303 households in the 2003 survey (not shown). In 2003, we selected 12138 households from the 2000 survey respondents and 12844 (99.7%) of the 2003 survey respondents. For both surveys, sampling was performed to be representative of the Mexican noninstitutionalized population. In the 2000 sample from low-income, rural regions of Mexico, the combined prevalence of overweight and obesity was nearly 60% in women and more than 50% in men (Table 1). In the 2003 sample from low-income, rural regions of Mexico, the combined prevalence of overweight and obesity was 49.5% in women and 44.9% in men (Table 2).

Results

In the 2003 sample, the prevalence of overweight and obesity was higher among men than among women in all income categories. In the 2003 sample, the prevalence of overweight and obesity was nearly 60% in women and more than 50% in men (Table 2). In the 2003 sample, the prevalence of overweight and obesity was nearly 60% in women and more than 50% in men (Table 2).

Comment

The high prevalence of obesity among the poor in Mexico is worrying, and there is a need for urgent public-health intervention to address this issue. The Mexican Ministry of Health and the Mexican National Council for the Prevention of Obesity, Diabesity, and Heart Disease have developed national guidelines for the prevention and treatment of obesity and diabetes. These guidelines recommend a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to the prevention and treatment of obesity and diabetes, including dietary and physical activity interventions, lifestyle modifications, and pharmacological treatment. The Mexican Ministry of Health and the Mexican National Council for the Prevention of Obesity, Diabesity, and Heart Disease have also developed national guidelines for the prevention and treatment of obesity and diabetes. These guidelines recommend a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to the prevention and treatment of obesity and diabetes, including dietary and physical activity interventions, lifestyle modifications, and pharmacological treatment.