

## KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION AS DETERMINANTS OF OBESITY IN PERI-URBAN AND URBAN DISTRICTS OF GHANA

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To investigate the relationship between knowledge and perception of overweight/obesity, on obesity development.

**Method:** This was a cross-sectional analytical study conducted in some peri-urban and urban communities in Ghana. Open-ended questionnaires were used to assess the knowledge and perception of 512 men and women about overweight/obesity. Anthropometric and percent body fat measurements were performed on all respondents. Data were analyzed using chi-square and logistic regression.

**Results:** Out of 87% peri-urban participants who considered they had a healthy body weight, 31% were overweight/obese ( $p < 0.001$ ), while 40.1% of 79.5% urban respondents who considered their body weight as normal were overweight/obese ( $p < 0.001$ ). Perception of nutritional status was a predictor of overweight/obesity in both urban ( $p < 0.001$ ) and peri-urban areas ( $p < 0.008$ ) but highest in the urban district.

**Conclusion:** Perception of obesity affects risk for obesity development. In both urban and peri-urban communities respondents had wrong perceptions about their body weight and this may have negative implications on their health. The findings suggest a need for public education on body weight and related health risk to help reduce overweight/obesity prevalence and associated co-morbidities.

**Keywords:** Knowledge, perception, urban, overweight, obesity, peri-urban

### INTRODUCTION

Few overweight or obese individuals view themselves as such. Sometimes, black women see thin women as unhealthy, thinking that they probably have HIV/AIDS [1]. Obesity poses a serious threat with its known health implications. These include some cancers, ischaemic heart diseases and diabetes. Obesity and other non-communicable diseases and their associated risk factors, were found more commonly among the poorest communities in all countries [2] and

occurred at younger ages in developing countries. South African women do not want to lose weight even though they know about the co-morbidities associated with having excess body fat [1].

Black women are likely to have highest increases in obesity in the future considering current growth rates [3]. Jackson et al. (1996) investigated the knowledge of obesity among patients between the ages of 20 and 59 years who attended a primary care clinic in Kelantan, Malaysia [4]. Knowledge of obesity was lacking; 15% of the study population did not think that obesity is bad for health, 21% had no idea about the causes of obesity. Participants did not think that fatty foods (11% participants) and sweets (40% participants) were risk factors of obesity [4]. In a paper presented at the 2006 annual

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