

## ANTHROPOMETRIC ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN RURAL NEW SOUTH WALES

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The prevalence of overweight and obesity was investigated in 520 school children, aged 12 to 13 years, in the Central Western area of New South Wales. Anthropometric data included height, weight, waist and hip measurements for 271 females and 249 males. A body mass index (BMI) in excess of 24.0 was observed for 16% of the females and for 10% of the males; two percent of both genders had BMIs in excess of 30.0. Interestingly, more than 50% of both groups had BMIs in the underweight range, that is, below 20.0. Although waist: hip ratios showed a tendency to increase with BMI, a highly significant statistical relationship was not observed. The BMI was compared with USA standardised percentile curves (Hammer et al. 1991).

In addition to anthropometric measurements, the subjects were asked to record the previous day's food intake for the purpose of determining food frequencies. select socio-economic data was also collected. Of particular interest was an assessment of the subject's self-perception of their body image.

In conclusion, this study demonstrated the difficulty in applying anthropometric standards to this particular age group. The degree of variation of the physical development of the adolescent makes it difficult to assess real weight problems on a population basis. Clearly, such assessment can only be conducted on an individual basis.

HAMMER, L.D., KRAEMER, H.C., WILSON, D.M., RITTER, P.L. and DORNBUSCH, S.M. (1991). Am. J. Diseases of Children 145: 259.

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