Trends and Persistent Disparities in Child Obesity During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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The COVID-19 pandemic has been associated with increases in pediatric obesity and widening pre-existing disparities. To better understand the pandemic's long-term impacts, we evaluated trends in obesity across different demographic groups during the pandemic through December 2022. Using a retrospective cohort design, we analyzed electronic health record data from a large pediatric primary care network. Logistic regression models fit using generalized estimating equations estimated odds ratios (ORs) for changes in the level and trajectory of obesity across 2-year month-matched periods: prepandemic (June 2017 to December 2019) and pandemic (June 2020 to December 2022). Among a cohort of 153,667 patients with visits in each period, there was a significant increase in the level of obesity at the pandemic onset [OR: 1.229, 95% confidence interval (CI): 1.211-1.247] followed by a significant decrease in the trend for obesity (OR: 0.993, 95% CI: 0.992-0.993). By December 2022, obesity had returned to prepandemic levels. However, persistent sociodemographic disparities remain.

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