Disordered eating behaviors and sedentary lifestyle prevention program for Mexican adolescents

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Background: Adolescents are the age group at the highest risk of developing disordered eating behaviors (DEB) due to the physical and psychological challenges they face. Mexican adolescents engage in less physical activity (PA) than what is considered desirable. According to the World Health Organization, levels of physical inactivity are rising worldwide, increasing the prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCD) such as obesity, one of Mexico's main public health problems.

Objective: To evaluate the effects of a universal prevention program for disordered eating behaviors (DEB) and sedentary lifestyle for Mexican adolescents. Methods: This was a quasi-experimental field study with repeated measures (pre-test, post-test, 6-and 12-month follow-up). Participants were 527 adolescents (240 females, 287 males) aged 15 to 19 at two private high schools in Hidalgo, Mexico. One school was allocated to the experimental group (49.5%) and the other to the control group (50.5%). Both females and males were given the Mexican Brief Questionnaire for Disordered Eating Behaviors and the short form of the International Physical Activity Questionnaire. In addition, male respondents answered the Mexico version of the Drive for Muscularity Scale (DMS).

Results: After a year, repeated-measures analyses of variance showed a significant reduction in the mean DEB scores in the experimental group ($p=0.029$). Mean DMS scores in males in the experimental group decreased significantly over time ($p < 0 .001$). The PA frequency and duration did not show a significant increase over time in the experimental group.

Conclusions: Overall, the implementation of the program had positive effects on the adolescents.

Significance to the Field of Dietetics: The program decreases DEB; in males reduces behaviors associated with the aim of gaining muscle mass. All these behaviors have an impact on the nutritional status of individuals, as a result of alterations in the quality and quantity of food intake. Also, it promotes the performance of healthy PA to prevent NCD.