

**Establishing the Limitations of Research regarding Obesity among
Youth with Disabilities:
a Narrative Literature Review**

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Abstract

Background: Over one-third of children and adolescents aged 2-19 are estimated to be overweight or obese. Increased rates of obesity are seen in the intellectual and/or developmental disability (I/DD) population, as well as in specific disorders such as Down Syndrome and Autism Spectrum Disorder. Within populations of syndromic obesity, such as Prader-Willi and Bardet-Biedl Syndrome, rates can range as high as 70% to 86%. Despite this, high quality data regarding weight reduction interventions in these groups is lacking.

Aim: Examine the literature to outline strengths and limitations of existing research

Method: Narrative review of published studies. The database PubMed was searched using terms related to “developmental disability,” “obesity management,” “pediatric” obesity,” “Down syndrome,” “Autism Spectrum Disorder,” “Prader-Willi Syndrome,” “Bardet-Biedl Syndrome,” among youth and young adults (birth-24 years) between 2010-2020. Articles meeting inclusion criteria were summarized and evaluated.

Results: Five review articles and three individual clinical trials met inclusion criteria and described weight management interventions ranging from multidisciplinary weight loss clinics, technology-delivered dietary sessions, to bariatric surgery outcomes. Studies varied by weight loss outcomes, and significant variance existed among the populations studied within each review.

Conclusions: This review reaffirms the scarcity of literature addressing the issue of obesity within the I/DD population. Additional, well powered, longitudinal and randomized studies are needed to better address obesity interventions in this underrepresented, heterogeneous population and to establish standardized clinical guidelines.
