Clinical Capsules

Girls' Body Images Can Be Bolstered

Adolescent girls who reported peer and parental attitudes that encouraged healthy behavior and exercise, rather than weight loss, were significantly more likely to report high levels of body satisfaction, said Amy M. Kelly, M.D., and her colleagues at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Overall, 26.7% of 2,357 middle and high school students surveyed in 1998-1999 reported high body satisfaction (J. Adolesc. Health 2005;37:391-6).

The study population included 46% whites, 21% Asian Americans, 20% African Americans, and 5% Hispanics. Body satisfaction was significantly higher among African American girls (40%) and underweight girls (39%) after controlling for ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and age. Girls with high body satisfaction were more likely to report having mothers who exercised for fitness and who encouraged them to be active and eat healthfully.

In addition, girls who reported high body satisfaction were more likely to report that they cared about their health, being fit, and exercising.

Group CBT as Effective as Sertraline

Children and adolescents aged 9-17 years with obsessive-compulsive disorder demonstrated equally significant symptom reductions after being randomized to 12 weeks of sertraline (Zoloft) or 12 weeks of group cognitive-behavioral therapy, said Fernando Ramos Asbahr, M.D., of the University of São Paulo (Brazil), and his colleagues (J. Am. Acad. Child Adolesc. Psychiatry 2005;44:1128-36).

Although 10 of 18 patients (56%) who received sertraline required reintroduction of the drug during the 9-month follow-up, only 1 of 19 (5%) of the group therapy patients relapsed during follow-up.

The weekly 90-minute group therapy sessions, directed by cognitive-behavioral therapists, included education about OCD, cognitive training, and family therapy.

Smoking Stunts Girls' Growth

Persistent cigarette smoking retards physical growth in early adolescence, based on data from a 3-year follow-up study of 496 girls aged 11-15 years, said Eric Stice, Ph.D., and Erin E. Martinez, of the University of Texas at Austin.

Persistent smoking—defined as daily smoking between baseline and at 1-year follow-up or between 1-year and 2-year follow-up—was associated with a 34% reduction in height growth, 53% reduction in weight gain, and 71% reduction in BMI during a 1-year interval compared with nonsmokers (J. Adolesc. Health 2005;37:363-70). Smoking initiation in adolescence was associated with a 36% reduction in weight gain and a 68% reduction in BMI but not with significant changes in height growth, compared with nonsmokers.

Termination of smoking during adolescence was associated with barely significant increases in weight and BMI, but not with significant changes in height.

Academic Problems Beget Bullying

Elementary school students who suffer from psychosocial distress are more likely to be involved in bullying, and those with academic problems are more likely to be victims or bully-victims, according to a cross-sectional study of 3,530 children, wrote Gwen M. Glew, M.D., of the University of Washington, Seattle, and her associates.

About 22% of third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students reported involvement in bullying as either the bully, the victim, or both (bully-victims) in a cross-sectional study of data from a school-based survey. Overall, lower levels of school achievement, feeling unsafe at school, feelings of not belonging at school, and feeling sad were positively associated with being a victim rather than a bystander (Arch. Pediatr. Adolesc. Med. 2005;159:1026-31).

Students who reported feeling unsafe or feeling sad most days were 2.5 times and 1.5 times, respectively, more likely to be a bully than a bystander. In addition, feeling unsafe, feelings of not belonging at school, and lower school achievement were associated with increased odds of being a bully-victim rather than a bystander.

Drug Reduces Disruptive Behavior

Daily risperidone was significantly more effective than placebo at reducing disruptive behaviors in children aged 5-17 years with autism spectrum disorders, said Pieter W. Troost, M.D., of the University of Groningen (the Netherlands), and his associates.

After 24 weeks of treatment in an open-label study, 18 of 26 children (69%) who received risperidone (Risperdal) were rated "much improved" or "very much improved" on the Clinical Global Impressions Scale of Symptom Change. During the discontinuation phase that followed the study phase, 8 of 12 children (67%) randomized to a placebo suffered relapses, compared with 3 of 12 (25%) who continued to take risperidone. The mean dose was 1.51 mg/kg at 8 weeks of treatment and increased to a mean of 1.81 mg/kg at 24 weeks to ensure treatment effects.

—Heidi Splete

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