Reviewer’s report

Title: Parent-Rated Behavior Problems Associated with Overweight After Controlling for Sleep Disordered Breathing: A Prospective Study

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Reviewer: Henri A Verhaaren

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General

As the authors state correctly in the last paragraph of the publication: we all agree that obesity is so multifactorial that all risk factors are just not includable within one study. The core message of this paper is apparent: behavioural problems are an essential component of obesity (the question remains unanswered in which direction: obesity as a cause of psychological problems or psychological problems contributing to the origins of obesity), independent on the findings of polysomnography.

Population-based studies will never yield a perfect study population. It is clear that there is some skewness in the weight distribution, reason to prefer odds analysis to more ‘classic’ statistics. But, everybody who ever took the risk of doing population studies, is deeply convinced of the imperfectness of whatever sample. It is not a reason not to publish this material.

From a paediatrician point of view, a lot of variables, not mentioned by the reviewers, could be added to the study protocol. The first of them is the ethnic, cultural and familial influences on obesity. The higher incidence of Hispanic obese children makes this point clear. A shortcoming in the population description is the lack of familial data, both on parents’ weights and on nutritional habits within the family. It is worth mentioning.

I would probably suggest to stress the multifactorial difficulty of whatever study in obesity even somewhat stronger. Obesity, as you can conclude from the differences between US and EU in this respect, cannot been explained by psychology alone.

So, my conclusion is that this is a valid study, performed from a very limited (but valid) angle of view. It is methodologically correct and the sample studied is impressive: it certainly answers the question that behavioural problems are independent from Sleep Disordered Breathing, and on top of this finding gives a nice overview of the psychological problems encountered in obese children. As long, as the authors, clearly define (and I think they did) the limits of their conclusions and the limitations of their “psychological point of observation”, I feel that the paper is worth publishing in his final format.