Editorial

Prevention of Obesity in Childhood and Adolescence

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Obesity in childhood and adolescence is one of most rapidly rising health problems all over the world. Data show that especially the frequency of extreme forms of obesity in young people are increasing in most countries. Childhood obesity is associated with several health complications such as premature diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases, joint problems, and last but not least by serious psychological problems.

Due to the fact that treatment of obese children is not really successful – the best documented weight loss in extremely obese adolescents is obtained by bariatric surgical procedures –, all efforts should be focused on preventive procedures. In this regard, WHO Europe urgently asked all member countries to implement evidence-based measures to halt the rise of the prevalence of overweight and obesity in children and adolescents. The Food and Nutrition Action Plan 2015–2020 covers all possible topics and strategies which should be included in national nutrition and prevention programs.

In November 2016, the Austrian Academic Institute for Clinical Nutrition organized an international symposium and invited all relevant groups from Europe and other countries dealing with prevention of overweight in children. The outstanding four contributions of this symposium are presented in the following special topic. The articles deal with prevention programs in early childhood (Kindergarten) [1], prevention programs in schools [2], and public health measures [3]. A comprehensive summary of the recent literature in regard to mechanisms and topics of implementation models [4] completes this overview on current developments in the field of obesity prevention in childhood and adolescence.

The goal of this special topic is to compile all recent results, ideas, problems, and aspects of prevention and to stimulate other groups and ourselves to increase the research in that particular field. If we do not find a successful way to tackle this very important health problem, the health policy is really in a great danger. The chance to overcome this major health problem has to be taken!

References

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- 3 Flodmark C-E: Prevention Models of childhood obesity in Sweden. *Obes Facts* 2018;11:257–262.
- 4 Weihrauch-Blüher S, Kromeyer-Hauschild K, Graf C, Widhalm K, Korsten-Reck U, Jödicke B, Markert J, Müller MJ, Moss A, Wabitsch M, Wiegand S: Current guidelines for obesity prevention in childhood and adolescence. *Obes Facts* 2018;11:263–276.