

Prevalence of body weight disorders among nurses in Vhembe and Capricorn Districts, Limpopo, South Africa

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Abstract

In South Africa (SA), anecdotal evidence concerning the prevalence of overweight and obesity in nurses is alarming, but no scientific studies have confirmed this notion. The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of underweight, overweight and obesity among 153 nurses aged 19->50 years practicing in Vhembe and Capricorn districts, Limpopo, South Africa. Participants were selected by purposive sampling from five hospitals in the region. Height and weight were measured using standard procedures. Body mass index (BMI) was calculated by dividing weight (kg) by the square of the height (m^2). Participation in physical activity was assessed by report. The WHO criteria determined BMI categories. Mean BMI of the nurses was $31.7 \pm 18.1 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$. Weight and BMI increased with age among the nurses. The prevalence of underweight ($\text{BMI} < 18.5 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$), overweight ($\text{BMI} \leq 25-29.9$), obesity ($\text{BMI} \geq 30 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$) and extreme obesity ($\text{BMI} \geq 30 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$) were 2.0%, 27.5%, 44.4% and 7.2%, respectively. The underweight ($\text{BMI} < 18.5 \text{ kg m}^{-2}$) rate was low (2.0%). The prevalence of overweight and obesity rose with age, peaking at ages 30-39 for overweight and ≥ 50 for obesity. The study revealed high prevalence of overweight and obesity among nurses in Vhembe and Capricorn districts, a rate comparable to the general population in South Africa. Future studies identifying risk factors for prevalence of overweight and obesity in nurses are needed.

Biography

Daniel T Goon is a Lecturer at Centre for Biokinetics, Recreation and Sport Science, University of Venda, Thohoyandou, South Africa. His research interests include body composition assessment and physical fitness testing. He is a level II accredited International Society for the Advancement of Kinanthropometry (ISAK II). He has authored and co-authored more than 54 scientific publications in peer-reviewed journals and a reviewer to several journals.