

Assessing the Attitudes and Actions of Pediatric and General Dentists Toward Childhood Obesity and Sugar-Sweetened Beverages

Robin Wright, PhD, Assistant Director, Research and Policy Center, American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry.

Paul S. Casamassimo, DDS, MS, Director, Research and Policy Center, American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry.

Abstract

Childhood obesity is a major health care concern in the United States, and oral health professionals have prime opportunities to intervene in the pediatric obesity problem due to their access to young patients and their abilities in addressing such obesity-related dietary habits as the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, in conjunction with Nationwide Children's Hospital, conducted an online survey with convenience samples of approximately 5,400 pediatric dentists, 1,000 pediatric dental residents, and 40,000 general dentists in the United States during the spring and summer of 2016. The survey is based on existing research and empirically supported behavioral theory. The survey objectives were to determine the attitudes and actions of pediatric dentists and general dentists regarding the provision of information and interventions related to childhood obesity and consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages. Variables evaluated included the beliefs, current practices, and behavioral intentions of pediatric dentists and general dentists regarding communication with parents of child patients about healthy weight and sugar-sweetened beverages, as well as the perceived barriers and incentives to providing those services within their practices.