Multiple Factors Influencing Weight in Caregivers of Children with Disabilities

There has been ample research showing that caregivers of children with intellectual disabilities are prone to obesity; however, little research has been done to identify which factor or factors are most predictive of weight gain in these populations (Gallagher & Hannigan, 2015). This was a mixed methods study using content analysis of open-ended questions and multiple regression analysis of variables to determine which factors were most highly associated with high caregiver BMI. Eighty-nine surveys were collected, and a multiple regression was then run using the caregiver’s BMI as the dependent variable and statistically significant correlations were used as the independent variables. Child’s negative reactivity temperament, child’s primary residential status, child’s African American ethnicity, socioeconomic status and caregiver’s worry about the child’s weight explain a significant amount (35.5%) of the variance in caregiver BMI ($R^2 = 0.355$, $F(5,59) = 6.487$, $p < 0.001$). It was concluded that being a caregiver of a child who has a negative reactivity component to their temperament is the strongest predictor of high caregiver BMI ($\beta = 0.406$, $p < 0.001$). It is imperative that healthcare providers pay attention not only to the child’s potential risk factors for weight gain, but the caregiver’s as well.