

NUTRITIONAL HEALTH HABITS IN SCHOOLCHILDREN AGED 11–18 YEARS

ALEXANDRA MACOVEI, ELENA RADU, LUMINIȚA
OANA CIOTARU, MIHAELA PAVEL*

Joining international concerns with the nutritional health of children and teenagers, the Romanian medical anthropology has shown during the last decades an increasing interest in investigating those risk factors that affect physical growth and development and subsequent maturity, as underweight or overweight. Advocating a weight management according to national and international standards based on anthropometrical measurements, the authors of this study focused their attention on food and physical activity related behaviors, the regularly incriminated issues for nutritional disturbances, among 3,238 pupils from Bucharest schools and high schools. The results indicate an increase of unhealthy food consumption during the school period, a decrease of physical activity (quite dramatic among the girls) and a growing incidence of tobacco and alcohol use.

Since many common illnesses in adults – like coronary disease, high blood pressure, stroke, various kinds of cancer, brittle bones, diabetes, chronic anxiety and depression – are considered having a start in younger years, a legitimate question regards the main risk factors that can be modified through lifestyle change. Evidence points towards dietary intake, physical activity and tobacco use.

Continuing a pilot-study that highlighted some theoretical and practical difficulties, in comparison with similar ones, done in western countries, the current paper exploits the outcomes of an inquiry concerning pupils' nutritional behavior. A questionnaire was applied with a view to stress mainly the subjects' knowledge and practice regarding nutrition and physical activity.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study sample was composed of 1,625 school children and 1,613 high school children coming from different school units and having different

* Technical assistance