



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Parents Foster Significant Misperceptions of Children's Weight and Often Misjudge Risk for Obesity in Adulthood

Orlando, FL, October 6, 2008 – Results of a survey presented at the American College of Gastroenterology's 73rd Annual Scientific Meeting in Orlando revealed that many parents do not accurately perceive their children as overweight or at risk for adulthood obesity. Obesity in the United States is often accompanied by an increased risk of gastrointestinal diseases and has emerged as a major health concern, particularly the issue of obesity among children and adolescents.

Researcher Rona L. Levy, Ph.D. and her colleagues at the University of Washington in Seattle and the University of Minnesota measured parental perceptions of their children's current weight and perceived risk for developing obesity as an adult.

Forty-six parents of children ages 5 to 9 with a body mass index (BMI) in the 70th percentile or higher were recruited for the study. Child height and weight were measured during a routine pediatric clinic visit. Parents were mailed a series of questionnaires, which included questions on their perception of their child's current weight, and whether they perceived that their child was at risk for developing obesity as an adult.

Dr. Levy and her research team found that even though all of the children had elevated BMI, less than 13 percent of the parents of overweight kids reported their child as currently overweight. Fewer than one-third perceived that their child's risk for adult obesity was above average or very high.

"Clearly there is a significant misperception by parents of their child's weight and risk for obesity," said Dr. Levy. "If we are going to address the growing epidemic of childhood obesity, parents' description and awareness of their children's overweight will have to be much more accurate," said Dr. Levy.

About the American College of Gastroenterology

Founded in 1932, the American College of Gastroenterology (ACG) is an organization with an international membership of more than 10,000 individuals from 80 countries. The College is committed to serving the clinically oriented digestive disease specialist through its emphasis on scholarly practice, teaching and research. The mission of the College is to serve the evolving needs of physicians in the delivery of high quality, scientifically sound, humanistic, ethical, and cost-effective health care to gastroenterology patients.

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The ACG is committed to providing accurate, unbiased and up-to-date health information. Visit the ACG Web site www.acg.gi.org to access educational resources for patients and their families spanning the broad range of digestive diseases and conditions - both common and not-so-common. Organized by disease, state and organ system, these educational materials, developed by ACG physician experts, are offered for the information and benefit of patients and the public.

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