



MEDIA RELEASE

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Parents happy to work with GPs in developing lifestyle changes for overweight/obese children

"Our trial found that GPs and families can work together to reduce overweight/obesity in children through family lifestyle behaviour change," according to Dr Zoë McCallum who conducted the randomised controlled trial of the Live, Eat and Play Program (LEAP). The trial results are in the current issue of the Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health, the peer reviewed journal of the Paediatrics Division of The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP).

The trial of the LEAP Program took place in Melbourne and involved 34 GPs and 163 5-9 year old children and their families. The LEAP Program provides GPs with materials and training to assist overweight children and to work with their families. Parents and children involved in the trial attended four consultations over 12 weeks and were given a 'Family Folder' to record goals and prompt lifestyle changes. Children were not regularly weighed, as the project does not focus on weight loss but rather on behavioural change such as regular activity, breakfast and healthy snacks.

"Our trial shows GPs can work with the families of overweight/obese children when GPs are given resources and training. GPs are well placed to identify and manage the large number of young children who are already overweight in Australia."

"Long-term maintenance of healthy weight has been most successfully achieved when the intervention is family based and when behaviour changes are achievable and sustainable. We specifically aimed to increase access to play equipment, time spent outdoors, parent support of and child preference for physical activity, water drinking, regular meals, and healthier snacks," Dr McCallum said.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) is responsible for training, educating and representing over 9,000 physicians in Australia and New Zealand. The RACP represents 23 medical sub-specialties including paediatrics, public health and occupational medicine. Physicians are often called specialists and are doctors who have completed an extra six years or more of training after their initial medical training and choose to specialise in a particular area of medicine.

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