

New research calls for lower limit to be set for South Asian obesity level

November 8 2011

A major study calling for levels of obesity among South Asians to be recalculated has been published by researchers from the University of Leicester.

A team from the University's Departments of [Health Sciences](#) and Cardiovascular Sciences have put the case for the point at which [South Asians](#) should be classed as obese to be redefined. Their study has been published in [PLoS One](#), a journal of the [Public Library of Science](#).

South Asians around the world are at increased risk of developing diabetes and [heart disease](#). They also get these [chronic diseases](#) at an earlier age. The study concludes that significantly lower BMI and [waist circumference](#) cut points for defining obesity are needed for migrant South Asians.

Dr Laura Gray and Professors Kamlesh Khunti and Melanie Davies led the research utilising data from over 6,000 participants screened for [Type 2 Diabetes](#) from Leicester. The research was funded by the Department of Health and the analysis was done as part of the work of the National Institute for Health Research Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (NIHR CLAHRC) in Leicestershire, Northampton and Rutland (LNR).

The NIHR CLAHRC – LNR brings together all the major commissioners and providers of healthcare services in the region in a partnership with the principal academic institution. This unique

collaboration between NHS trusts and the University of Leicester is funded by the NIHR and is part of a five year programme to ensure that the lessons learnt from research studies are rapidly and effectively implemented, and develops research capacity and capability within local healthcare organisations.

Professor Khunti who is Professor of Primary Care Diabetes and Vascular Medicine at the University of Leicester said: "Our study shows that the conventional definition of obesity (BMI 30 kg/m²) needs to be lowered in migrant South Asians to detect equivalent levels of cardiovascular risk, based on levels of glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol.

"Our study suggests that migrant South Asians should be classed as obese and therefore at high risk of developing diabetes based on a BMI of between 23-28 kg/m²."

The researchers also define similar lower cut points for waist circumference.

Professor Khunti said: "This is the first study to reassess obesity definitions in a migrant UK south Asian population and could have important clinical implications.

"This research has huge implications globally for screening strategies for south Asians based on BMI and waist circumference cut-points. We need to lower these cut-points when screening for diabetes and cardiovascular disease in these groups."

More information: Gray LJ, Yates T, Davies MJ, Brady E, Webb DR, et al. (2011) Defining Obesity Cut-Off Points for Migrant South Asians. PLoS ONE 6(10): e26464. [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0026464](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0026464)

Provided by University of Leicester

Citation: New research calls for lower limit to be set for South Asian obesity level (2011, November 8) retrieved 17 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-11-limit-south-asian-obesity.html>

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