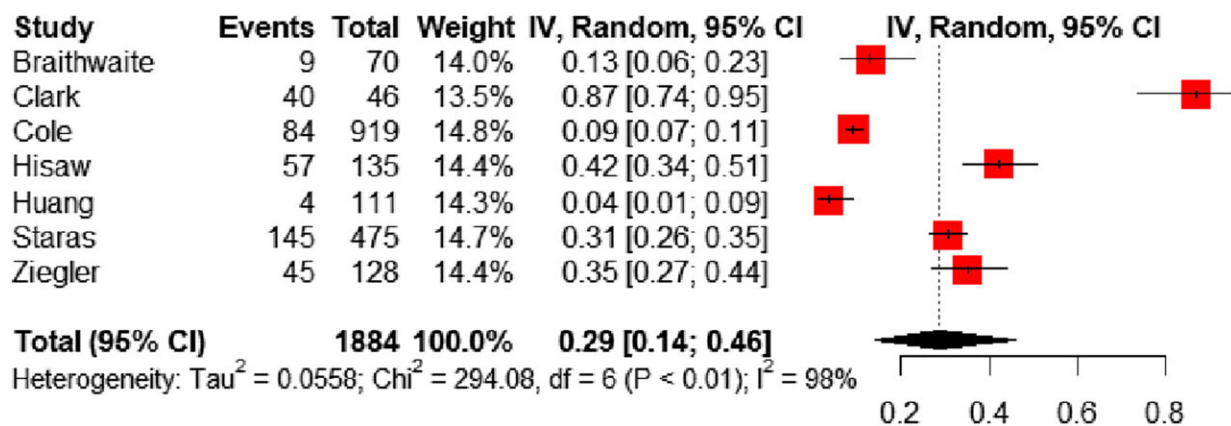


Study finds patients happy to get support on how to lose weight during routine dental appointments

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Incidence of height and weight screening by dental teams. Credit: *Obesity Reviews* (2024). DOI: 10.1111/obr.13726

As public health experts search for new ways to tackle the obesity crisis, a Loughborough University study has found that patients would welcome support from their dentist on weight management.

With 39 million children under five years of age and 1.9 billion adults worldwide living with excess weight, obesity is a global public health crisis.

Methods for tackling these increasing levels of obesity have changed drastically in recent years, with surgeries and, more recently, [weight loss drugs](#) being seen as a quicker approach than traditional methods such as diet changes and exercise.

Loughborough researchers have been looking at how dentists can help to address the issue. The group have been working directly with dentists and patients to assess how both parties feel about weight management screening and interventions becoming part of a routine dental appointment.

National guidance in the UK already recommends collaboration across [health care services](#), including dental teams, to support people living with obesity to make healthy lifestyle changes during their appointments.

The study, which was conducted by researchers within the University's Centre for Lifestyle Medicine and Behavior (CLiMB), found that involvement of dental teams is low and not routine practice at present. The views of teams already providing [weight management](#) support, though, are positive, both with respect to the integration of the service into patient assessment and the receptiveness of the families receiving their services.

The public also appeared in favor of weight screening and discussion if it is performed sensitively and consistently for all patients regardless of their weight status.

The study has been led by pediatric dentist Jessica Large and Amanda Daley, a Professor of Behavioural Medicine and Director of CLiMB.

Speaking about the project, Jessica said, "It is positive to see that both the public and those within the profession are supportive of weight screening, discussion, and signposting to support becoming more routine

during dental appointments.

"All health professionals have the opportunity to contribute to reducing obesity and improving health, and these results suggest that with the right support and training, dentists could help in a positive way to achieve this."

Professor Daley said, "Dentists consult with most of the population at least once a year, providing an ideal opportunity to screen and intervene to reduce obesity. They also engage in other behavior change interventions such as stopping smoking and dietary advice in connection to reducing sugary snacks and drinks. This puts them in a strong position to address weight concerns.

"The initial assessment has shown that members of the public would like to see support from their [dentist](#) in relation to weight loss, and with obesity levels continuing to grow, an 'all hands on deck' approach is now increasingly necessary."

The study identified several barriers from dental teams to raising the topic of weight and offering interventions, such as weight stigma, lack of time, and fear of offending. There is also a clear need for the necessary training and support to be in place if this [holistic approach](#) to dental care is to be successful. Clear guidance and advocacy from stakeholders, including professional regulatory bodies, is also required.

The work is [published](#) in the journal *Obesity Reviews*.

More information: Jessica F. Large et al, Public and dental teams' views about weight management interventions in dental health settings: Systematic review and meta-analysis, *Obesity Reviews* (2024). [DOI: 10.1111/obr.13726](#)

Provided by Loughborough University

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