



## USE OF IAP BMI STANDARDS FOR MEASURING NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF ADOLESCENTS IN INDIA

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Sir,

Adolescent is an age of opportunity for making our future generation healthy. Body Mass Index is frequently used as an indicator of nutritional status for adolescents.

Government of India has launched Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) in 2014 for improving adolescent health<sup>1</sup>. One of the strategies of RKSK is celebration of Adolescent Health Days for every 1000 population once in every quarter. One of the services to be provided on AHD is measuring nutritional status of adolescents using BMI. Guidelines for AHD in operational framework of RKSK, also suggest referral of adolescent with high or low BMI<sup>2</sup>. Recently conducted survey by Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, Rapid Survey Of Children 2013-14<sup>3</sup> has also measured BMI for adolescent girls. However, adult standard for BMI was used in the survey as well as recommended for use under RKSK<sup>2,3</sup>.

Adolescent is a growing age and application of adult standards for BMI to this age group may not appropriate. Growth reference for children and adolescent (Age 5 to 19 years) have been developed by WHO since 2007<sup>4</sup>. However, it is not prescriptive growth standards as it is not possible to control environmental variables in this age group. Nutritional, environmental, and genetic factors along with timing of puberty do influence the growth curve for the age group 5-18. Therefore, it is necessary to have country specific growth charts to monitor growth in this age group<sup>5</sup>.

IAP has also published growth charts for Indian children and Adolescents in 2007 and revised it in 2015<sup>5</sup>. IAP growth charts should be used for monitoring growth of Indian children and adolescents.

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IAP growth charts has clearly defined overweight and obesity which is helpful for the users in the field. At the same time, 44.7% of adolescent girls are having BMI less than 18.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup> (under nutrition) as per RSOC<sup>3</sup>. WHO reference for 5-18 years have categories of thinness and severe thinness. However, thinness and severe thinness are not defined in details in IAP growth charts. It is essential that IAP growth charts for 5-18 years of age also has clarity on thinness and severe thinness for use at field level.

Use of IAP growth standards for 5-18 years of age should be encouraged; for interpreting BMI results of adolescents under RKSK and also for any survey in the country measuring growth of children and adolescents, instead of adult standards of BMI.

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