

## **Anna Wright – Who's responsible for addressing child overweight and obesity? An analysis of health professional discourse**

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Overweight and obesity in children is an issue that has increasingly become the focus of the media and government agencies both in New Zealand and around the world. Despite this, within primary and secondary healthcare settings there are varying levels of response to what has been described as an epidemic with serious consequences to individual health status. This study looked firstly at the role and responsibility of health professionals in addressing overweight and obesity in children, and secondly, the barriers these health professionals face and the reasons for these barriers.

Semi structured interviews were conducted with seven health professionals including doctors and nurses from both the primary and secondary healthcare settings. The transcribed interviews were analysed using Foucauldian discourse analysis methodology to identify and explore the dominant discourses.

Four key discourses emerged as influencing the health professionals' perspective of whose role and responsibility it is to address overweight and obesity in children. These included the dominant medical discourse, which all the health professionals drew from first and then three subsequent discourses, the social, socioeconomic and cultural / ethnicity discourses. Whose role and responsibility it is to address overweight and obesity in children is poorly defined and reflects the complexity of the issue and the influence of multiple intersecting discourses. There are several recommendations from this research including: the need for ownership at government level; the need for additional services, support and resources for health professionals within both the primary and secondary healthcare setting; and the need to improve culturally acceptable practices to meet the needs of Māori and Pacific peoples.