

Abstract

The growing prevalence of obesity, both in adults and children, not only in developed countries, is perceived as a global problem due to the associated health risks.

This study quantifies the media content in the selected period 01.07.2019-30.06.2020, it identifies which media and with what reach communicates the obesity most often, as well as verifies whether this finding correlates with the sources of information most often used by obese people. In addition, it finds a correlation between the use of the term obesity in the title and the complexity of the information contained therein. The aim of this study is to analyze media content as a source of information on obesity and to verify in this context whether media content supports the stereotype in terms of depicting obesity as a disease and health risk associated with individual responsibility at the level of etiology and therapy, including appropriate stigmatizing visualization. Furthermore to verify, whether the authors of media content related to obesity, as this is perceived as a disease, most often mediate the views and perspectives of doctors, respectively obesitologists, and are a means for government communication of strategies in the field of health and health literacy of the Czech Republic's population.

There was used quantitative content analysis to verify the validity of the hypotheses set in accordance with the aims of this study. From the research sample of 4,190 online and print media articles, including transcripts of TV and radio programs, 514 articles were included in the analysis and subsequently categorized within individual variables. At the same time, the results of a questionnaire survey focused on information sources used by obese people were partly used. The questionnaire was created using the survio.cz tool and distributed in electronic form to a selected population interested in weight loss. A total of 93 complete responses were obtained.

The analysis of 514 articles showed that obesity is mostly communicated by online media (72 % of analyzed articles), which correlates with the findings of the questionnaire survey (78.3 % of 93 respondents mentioned online media as the main information source). It was confirmed that the Czech media support the traditional and stigmatizing image of obesity. Obesity thus is most often portrayed as a disease and a health risk factor, whereas etiology and treatment are linked to personal responsibility, especially in the areas of nutrition, eating habits and physical activity. Systemic factors or genetics, as well as pharmacotherapy or bariatric surgery are communicated in a negligible volume only. A negative attitude towards obese people is supported by visualization, where they are depicted in stereotypical situations, such as overeating. In addition, the analysis confirmed that authors of the media content cite obesitologists only in just over a tenth of all monitored articles (11.67 %) and that the media do not fulfill the role of a mediator of government communication in the area of the health strategic framework.

Keywords: obesity, nutrition, physical activity, media, quantitative content analysis