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**Blaming Parents and Ignoring Biology in Childhood Obesity
OAC Research Reveals Big Misunderstandings**

Tampa, Fla. – Childhood obesity affects 13.7 million U.S. children and adolescents. A child that is affected by obesity is at risk for many additional diseases once only seen in adults, including high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes. Childhood obesity is a complex disease that has many causes. But new research from the Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) shows that people in the U.S., U.K., France, and Italy don't understand the biological and environmental factors driving this epidemic. Instead they are more likely to blame parents and bad habits.

Lead author Ted Kyle presented this research today at ObesityWeek in Las Vegas. This is the world's largest annual meeting of obesity researchers and professionals.

To gain a better understanding about public perceptions of childhood obesity, ConscienHealth and OAC conducted a survey of over 4,000 adults across the U.S., U.K., France and Italy. The 2019 Google Consumer Survey found that in the U.S., U.K. and France, most people blamed poor diet and exercise habits as the primary cause for severe obesity among children. In Italy, the top response was to blame excessive marketing of junk food.

In addition, researchers probed further in the U.S. They found that most people (54%) agreed with the statement, "Parents are at fault when severe obesity occurs in young children."

The researchers found that public opinion in all four countries placed genetics and physiology at the bottom of the list for causes of severe obesity in children. However, scientific research has proven the opposite to be true. Severe obesity is a serious and complex disease, most often driven by physiology and genetics.

"The belief that severe obesity in children is caused and mostly treated through eating and activity habits is harming the health of children around the world," said Joe Nadglowski, OAC President and CEO. "When the causes of a disease are misunderstood, it leads to policy decisions and treatments that are not successful in improving the health of those affected." Nadglowski was a co-author on the study.

Kyle noted that for decades, scientists have known that obesity is a highly heritable disease. Said Kyle, "Approximately 70% of an individual's risk of obesity is driven by genetic factors. The environment in turn activates this risk factor. Genes set the table for obesity and the environment serves it up."

To view an abstract of the study, please visit: [ObesityWeek.com/abstract/public-presumptions-that-severe-childhood-obesity-is-simply-caused-by-bad-habits/](https://www.obesityweek.com/abstract/public-presumptions-that-severe-childhood-obesity-is-simply-caused-by-bad-habits/)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC), a more than 70,000 member-strong National non-profit organization, is dedicated to improving the lives of individuals affected by the disease of obesity through education, advocacy and support.

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