Today’s piece was prepared by Jason Lockrow, MD, based on a Seattle Times article entitled “Measuring body fat may weigh on students’ self-image.”

<http://seattletimes.com/html/health/2021123513_healthbmixml.html>

The article highlights the "backlash that is building across the nation" against the use of BMI screening by school systems as part of the fight against obesity. The journalist focuses on several groups that are resistant to BMI measurement in schools, pointing to the potential harm to self-esteem. She references the Institute of Medicine's recommendation for BMI measurement in schools, owing to the 70% linkage between childhood and adult obesity, and the ease with which BMI measurement can be accomplished. She quotes a local physician explaining that many children do not routinely have well child exams, making schools a valuable screening location. These benefits are contrasted with the opening paragraphs, which detail a mother's story of the anxiety that her 10 year old child felt being "discreetly" weighed, and the subsequent discussions between her classmates. The article also references "some groups" concerned that measurement of weight could contribute to eating disorders in adolescent populations, without any identifiable proponent or evidence listed.

Aside from the opening vignette, there is no evidence put forth that being weighed in school affects self-esteem. The journalist inter-mixes these unsupported claims and testimonials with a recent study by a Berkeley pediatrician studying the efficacy of BMI measurements, who did not find a reduction in obesity levels following BMI screening. The article elides this pediatrician’s other work, which has found that letters sent home rarely explain BMI and its implications, and that changes to the current notification process is warranted. The article does, in the last paragraph, explain that obesity is a much more pervasive problem than eating disorders, and that "experts" dispute any claims of a connection.

Families can consider BMI and obesity, and “weigh in” themselves regarding value in monitoring supported by medically based sources, such as:

**RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES ON OBESITY**

* Childhood Obesity Facts <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/obesity/facts.htm> *CDC site*
* BMI Executive Summary <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/obesity/BMI/pdf/BMI_execsumm.pdf> *CDC*
* Food Psychology <http://foodpsychology.cornell.edu/> *Cornell University site through Dept of Psychology focusing on helping consumers understand their relation to food and packaged foods, to help use psychology to make more healthful food choices.*
* The “Real” Cola Bears: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=myxwCEGcBYc> *Spoof on Coca Cola Bears cartoon with eery message of sodas and obesity*

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!