

Abstract: Governing the conduct of health of overweight pregnant women. Article submitted at the 27.th of August 2015

Background: Overweight is no longer considered a risk factor; a recent Danish public health report has classified it as a chronic disease. Health care professionals' approach to governing overweight pregnant women is affected by this breach in the discursive field. Thus, overweight pregnant women have become an issue for experts, who are recommended to rhetorically address them in stricter ways.

Aim: The aim of this article is to critically analyse recommendations regarding how health professionals should govern these high-risk individuals and to discuss the implications of such governance for overweight pregnant women.

Methods: The theory of social construction and the concept of governmentality are applied in a discourse analysis on the prevention of overweight among pregnant women in Denmark. This study draws on a documentary analysis of the discourse in central governmental documents on overweight. Three forms of freedom (as discipline, as solidarity and as autonomy) are transferred into three forms of governing and constitute the conceptual framework.

Results: The main finding is that public health programmes encourage governing through solidarity, including a palette of autonomy-making, responsibility-making and disciplinary technologies, to govern people to promote physical health.

Conclusion: Public health programmes conjure up an image of overweight individuals as strongly burdened subjectivities. The implications for overweight pregnant women are the formation of new subjectivities, engagement in patient associations, the threat of exclusion from communities and social citizenship and other forms of stigmatization.

Authors:

Carsten K Bak, Associated Professor at The Department of Health, Science and Technology, Aalborg University, Denmark

Tine M Kristiansen, Assistant Professor at The Department of Health, Science and Technology, Aalborg University, Denmark

Presenting author: Lene Toxvig, Department of Midwifery, University College of Northern Jutland, Selma Lagerlöfs Vej 2, 9220 Aalborg Øst, Denmark. ln@ucn.dk

Preferred presentation: Oral