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Trend in morbid obesity prevalence in Korea adults, 2002 - 2013

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Background: Morbid obesity is the most severe stage of obesity and it is likely to be accompanied with multiple chronic diseases, lowering life expectancy. In Korea, however, it has not been a major concern and there is no accurate data due to relatively low prevalence of morbid obesity. This study aims to analyze the prevalence and lifestyle of severe obese population in Korea.

Methods: This study adopted a time-series analysis utilizing data acquired from a national health examination program conducted every two years by National Health Insurance Corporation during 2002 to 2013 in Korea and the number of total cases was 110,251,027. In addition, the data from the 2010 Population and Housing Census conducted by Statistics Korea was used for standardization by age and gender.

Results: The total prevalence of morbid obesity increased 1.59 times over a decade (2002~2003: 2.63%, 2012~2013: 4.19%). The prevalence of morbidly obese men more rapidly increased than that of morbidly obese women which were 1.86 times and 1.3 times, respectively. Also, the share of current smokers was 27.7 percent in BMI \geq 30 group which is 1.26 times higher than BMI \geq 18.5 and $<$ 25 group. BMI \geq 30 group shows 1.51 times higher moderate/high alcohol drinker proportion (6.5%) and 0.81 times lower high physical activity group proportion (7.1%) than BMI \geq 18.5 and $<$ 25 group.

Conclusions: The prevalence of morbid obesity continues to rise in Korea and its growth rate is higher than that of obesity. Therefore, more effective strategy for severe obese population is needed in the near future.

