

Assessment of height as an indicator of population nutritional status Evaluación de la estatura como indicador nutricional poblacional

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Background: Chilean girls of middle and low socioeconomic levels are shorter than their European or North American counterparts. Aim: To challenge the hypothesis that undernutrition is the cause of the shorter stature of Chilean girls. Material and methods: Height, weight, sexual maturation, biacromial and bi-iliac diameters of low and middle socioeconomic level Chilean children aged 0 to 20 years old, were compared with data from French, English and North American children in the same age range. Results: Chilean girls had an earlier sexual maturation, had bigger biacromial and bi-iliac diameters and had a higher weight for height than European girls. Weight for height of these girls was over the values proposed by the Chilean Ministry of Health, that are based in NCHS/WHO tables. Chilean girls with recent European ancestry were taller than girls without this ancestry. Chilean boys were smaller and had lower weights than their foreign counterparts. Bi-iliac diameters were similar to th