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Title: Understanding the double burden of malnutrition in food insecure households in Brazil

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Introduction: Household food insecurity (HFI) has been associated with both obesity among mothers and undernutrition among children. However, this association has not been well investigated in mother/child pairs living in the same household. The objective of this study was to examine the relationship of co-existence of maternal overweight and child stunting with HFI in Brazil.

Methods: We used secondary data analyses from the 2006 Brazilian National Demographic and Health Survey. We analyzed the nutritional status of 4299 pairs of 15 to 49 years old mothers and their children under 5 years of age. The double burden of malnutrition (DBM) was defined as the presence of a mother overweighted and a stunted child in the same household. HFI was measured with the Brazilian HFI Measurement Scale. The association between DBM and HFI was examined with hierarchical multivariable logistic regression analyses.

Results: Severe HFI was associated with DBM after adjusting for macroeconomic and household level socioeconomic and demographic variables (Adjusted OR: 2.65; IC: 1.17-8.53).

Conclusion: Findings suggest that policies and programmes targeting household food insecurity are needed to prevent the co-existence of child chronic undernutrition and maternal overweight/obesity in the same household. These investments are likely to be highly cost-effective as stunting has been identified as one of the major risk factors for poor child development and adult overweight/obesity as a strong risk factor for the development of costly chronic diseases including type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.