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Group success with the picky eater: Inter-professional parent group versus individual OT treatment

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Background: Feeding difficulties are common in young children and have been estimated to occur in 25-35% of typically developing children. The waitlist for occupational therapy feeding services has increased for numerous reasons including the new diagnostic category, avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder. To manage the waitlist, inter-professional feeding groups were offered. Although an inter-professional approach is recommended, the literature contains few systematic descriptions. In 2012, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) completed its program evaluation of this group approach and determined that it was an effective modality for children with feeding challenges. However, parents' perceptions of this new approach are not well documented. The purpose of this study was to acquire early insight into parents' perceptions of an inter-professional group (IG) service delivery model and an individual one-on-one (ONO) approach.

Methodology: Participant eligibility was determined through referrals to occupational therapy for feeding challenges. 40 participants, (n=20 per group), were recruited using convenience sampling. Assignment was through simple randomization. The measuring process of care (MPOC)-20 was used to assess parents' perceptions of healthcare professionals' behavior.

Findings: The IG scored high across all five constructs (mean range 5.1-5.9). Two significant constructs, coordinated and comprehensive Care and respectful and supportive care have means of 5.76 and 5.9 respectively. The scores across all constructs and between groups could be ranked identically. Children in both groups acquired adequate feeding skill levels. Wait times were lowered by 71%. The IG children required fewer follow-up visits than the ONO children. Results offer further evidence that an inter-professional-lead group program can provide care that brings the parents satisfaction. The authors agree that the value provided by the IG is in-line with patient and healthcare expectations.

Biography

Carrie Owen is a Registered Occupational Therapist and Lactation Consultant specializing in infants, toddlers, young children, and teens with feeding challenges. She has provided expert advice and guidance to parents on subjects including development, feeding, and sensory processing. She is the Creator and Coordinator of the Inter-professional Feeding Groups for children between the ages of 5 months and 14 years at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. She is presently studying the effectiveness of the feeding group for children between 4 and 12 years of age. She was the Principle Author on a manuscript published in Nutrition in Clinical Practice and has also published in Today's Parent magazine. Presently, she is working both at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and in private practice. Her teaching experience includes the University of Ottawa, the University of Toronto and York University.

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