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Family Practice Based Interventions to Reduce Stress in Parents

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Family Practice Based Interventions to Reduce Stress in Parents of Children with Autism

Amy Campbell Hanson, RN
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Abstract

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a group of neurodevelopmental disorders typically diagnosed before the age of three that affect the child's behavior, communication and social skills. Although a pediatric neuropsychologist often confirms a diagnosis of this disorder, the primary care provider is highly involved in the ongoing care of the autistic child. It is well researched that parenting a child with ASD is correlated with high levels of stress, anxiety and depression, and is not uncommon for the parent of a child with ASD to be a patient of the family practice as well. While the current interventions for the child with ASD vary, it is clear that the stress experienced by parents of children with autism over a one year period.

The outcomes of these studies were reviewed, compared and summarized, and it was concluded that the primary care providers must be involved in the ongoing care of the autistic child. It is well researched that parenting a child with ASD is correlated with high levels of stress, anxiety and depression, and it is not uncommon for the parent of a child with ASD to be a patient of the family practice as well. While the current interventions for the child with ASD vary, the family practice-based peer support group with rotations of primary care providers, nursing staff, occupational/physical therapists, and mental health counselors compared to standard ASD intervention alone affects the stress experienced by parents of children with autism over a one year period.

Research Question

Among parents of children aged 2-18 diagnosed with ASD, how does a family-practice-based peer support group with rotations of primary care providers, nursing staff, occupational/physical therapists, and mental health counselors compared to standard ASD intervention alone affect the stress experienced by parents of children with autism over a one year period?

Discussion

Parents have individual needs in dealing with the stress of parenting a child with ASD.
- Personalization and multiple modalities of support are beneficial in reducing parental stress and increasing overall well-being in the setting of parenting a child with ASD.
- A family practice in which the parent and child are both patients of the same provider or team of providers is an ideal setting to implement a support group.
- There is sufficient evidence to suggest that a family-practice-based peer support/education group with rotations of medical providers, mental health providers and therapists may reduce stress in parents of children with ASD.
- Future research indicated in the most beneficial types of interventions and the best way to integrate this care into standard medical practice.

Background

Psychological Toll on Parents
- Stress
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Thoughts of death
- Family Practice
- Interpersonal	Stereotypical
- Restrictions, Repetitive, Stereotypical
- Limited social interaction
- Delayed communication
- Reduced confidence
- Life-time cost $1.4-2.4 billion
- Special Education
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Stress

Effect on Family
- Life-time cost SL 4-2.2 Billion
- Reduced education
- Reduced confidence
- Reduced parental confidence
- Dysfunctional parent-child interactions
- Physical therapy
- Speech therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Mental health counseling

Type of Study | Intervention | Outcomes |
--- | --- | --- |
RCT | Peer-led intervention based treatments and positive adult psychology treatments. | Decrease in parental stress, anxiety, depression and insomnia. |
RCT | Group psycho-educational intervention focused on parent training. | Decrease in parental stress and depression. |
RQI | Use of color to improve understanding of treatment. | Increase parental satisfaction with multidisciplinary focused care. |
CQI | Identifying and measuring parental stress. | Increased parental satisfaction with multidisciplinary, focused care. |
Outcomes | No intervention | No improvement in parental stress or depression. |
Systematic Review | Childhood autism spectrum intervention effectiveness | No improvement in parental stress or depression. |
RCT | Psychologist in primary care setting using individualized program for four variable length sessions. | Improved dysfunctional interactions, no effect on parental stress levels. |

Key Aspects of Group
- Multi-modal
- Personalized
- Parental ASD education
- Peer support and networking
- Psychological support: Mindfulness, Adult Psychology, Problem Solving, etc.
- Early Intervention/Early Access
- On-site child care

Primary Care Provider Role
- Use of quantifiable and reproducible measurement tools of stress, depression and anxiety
- Identification of parental stressors
- Education on stress reduction techniques
- Encouragement of group attendance
- Continued support for Early Intervention treatments in patients

Barriers
- Financial: staff compensation
- Insurance coverage
- Time commitment
- Access
- Children with ASD already have multiple providers & interventionists

Results

Family Practice
- Medical
- Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech Therapy
- Mental Health
- Psychological
- Peers
- Parents of ASD children

Provider Role
- Primary Care
- Family Practice
- Interventions
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Children
- special education
- psychology
- occupational therapy
- physical therapy
- mental health counseling

Discussion
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