



Efficacy of parent information sessions for understanding children with ADHD

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Introduction

Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that is commonly diagnosed in childhood, and includes a persistent pattern of impulsive or hyperactive behaviour and/or inattention that is developmentally more than expected¹.

Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder is one of the most common developmental neurological disorders globally¹. A recent meta-analysis study estimated a global prevalence rate of 7.2%². In Australia, children with ADHD include at least 7.4% of children and adolescents³.

ADHD can influence an individual across their lifespan, and have negative implications for educational achievement, occupational attainment, and an increased likelihood of crime and interaction with the criminal justice system⁴. The socioeconomic costs of ADHD are well established and documented⁴⁻¹¹. Therefore, it is important to consider treatment options for ADHD that can intervene to provide those with the disorder the best opportunity to thrive and succeed across their life.

Early intervention for children and adolescents with ADHD has a positive impact on long term outcomes, particularly for at-risk groups^{12,13}. Early intervention includes accurate diagnosis and assessment, and early intervention treatment options.

Parent education and information sessions are considered the first line of treatment for parents of children with ADHD both under and over five years old according to the NICE Guidelines¹⁴. These guidelines suggest that education sessions can be effective with as few as one to two sessions¹⁴. The content of these sessions can include psychoeducation about ADHD including the causes, impact, and advice for parents.

The Complex Attention-deficit Hyperactivity Disorders Service (CAHDS) conduct parent information sessions across a number of different topics throughout each year. The aim of these workshops is to help individuals better understand and relate to children with attention difficulties and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), in alignment with recommended early intervention research into ADHD¹⁴.

Objective

To assess the efficacy of the parent information workshops on parental belief in their understanding, use of strategies, and resources, to help children with attention difficulties.

Method

Families were recruited from the general community (including schools, and public and private child health services) to attend workshops held throughout the year. Parents complete a feedback survey before and after the session, and the results were compared. Data was collected from 2016 to 2019.

Parent Information Workshop Topics

Sensory Based Regulation: Its impact on concentration and keeping calm

- Information regarding sensory processing differences frequently experienced by children with ADHD
- Increase understanding of what is sensory processing and its influence on attention, learning and emotional regulation.
- Reflection on their own and their child's sensory preferences
- Identify patterns in the way their child responds to information (such as seeking or avoiding sensation)
- Provided with a framework for considering how to support children with sensory processing difficulties
- Calming sensory-based strategies are explored
- Resources and supports in the community are discussed

Understanding your child's behaviour

- Help parents look at behaviour management from a slightly different perspective
- Information to identify possible drivers for their child's behaviour
- The session encourages discussions on what behaviour is, and what the child or adolescent is trying to communicate by using those behaviours
- What the child might be trying to achieve through their behaviour along with how this pattern can be reinforced
- Exploring the use of punishments versus consequence as part of behaviour management strategies
- Gain a better understanding of the reasons for their child's behaviour to help their child communicate and achieve their need/goals now and in the future in a more prosocial manner; rather than a list of generic behaviour management strategies



Communication and ADHD: Social connectedness

- Presented by CAHDS Speech Pathologists
- Provides information on communication difficulties (verbal, written and social) as related to ADHD including developmental disorders and specific learning difficulties
- Specifically includes discussion around the importance of communication skills, both verbal and written, to learn and demonstrate their knowledge and build and maintain relationships with others
- Discusses available supports, therapies and classroom accommodations and encourages discussion around how these can assist individuals to access learning
- Social connectedness refers to the relationships people have with others and we discuss how this is integral to wellbeing and mental health

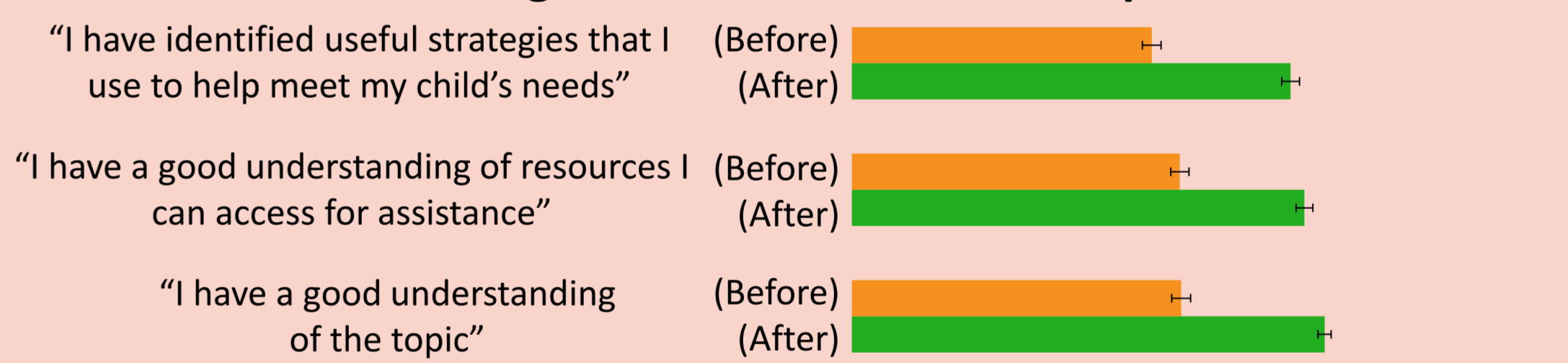
Family self-care and stress management

- Looks at the impact stress has on the family unit and how families can enhance their self-care
- Focuses on participants developing a better understanding of the importance of self-care and how they can realistically achieve this in their family
- Explores why family self-care is important, positive aspects and challenges when caring for their child, the body's physiological response to stress and the impact of stress on family relationships and individuals' emotional well-being and coping
- Helpful stress management strategies are identified through discussion
- Parents are also provided with resources and services to assist with family self-care

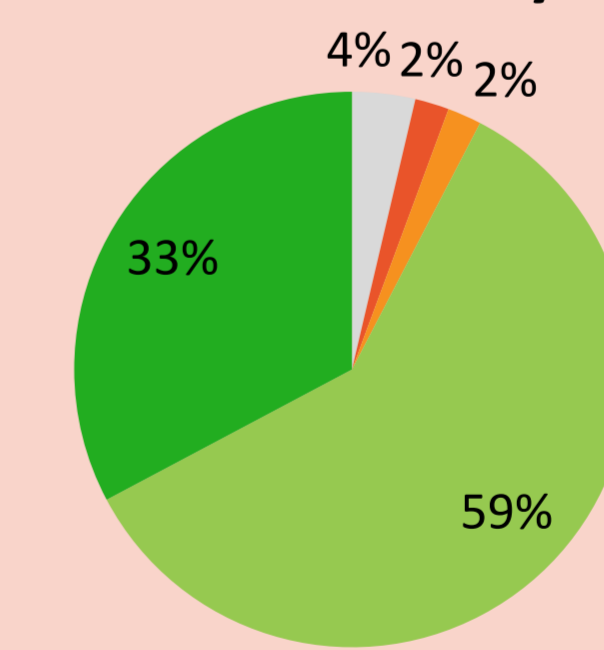
Results

- 354 participants attended 52 workshops across four years.
- Wilcoxon Signed-rank tests were used to evaluate the ratings from parents on their understanding, strategies gained, and resources gained before and after each workshop.
- Bonferroni correction was used to reduce the significance level to $p < .016$ as three tests were used across each workshop topic.
- The findings were that 3 out of 4 workshops demonstrated a significant improvement in understanding and resources gained.
- All four workshops demonstrated a significant positive change in strategies to use with their child.

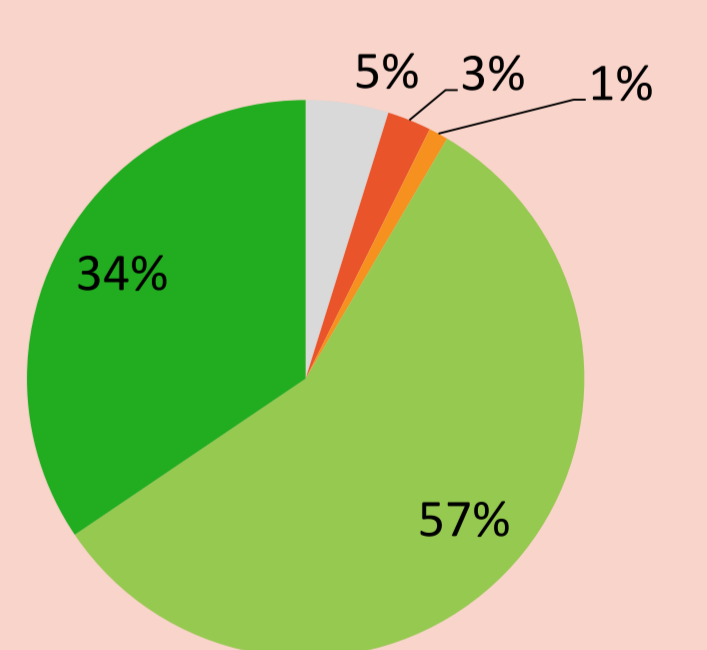
Change in parents understanding, strategies and resources after attending the information workshops



"I learnt something which will help me meet my child's needs and family in the future"



"I found the strategies discussed useful"



Conclusions

Parent information sessions present as an efficacious treatment approach for early intervention in ADHD; particularly in providing strategies to assist parents and caregivers in helping their child, in alignment with NICE guidelines.

Future research will focus on measuring parental stress before and after attending the parent information workshops as a more robust measure of treatment. We also plan to increase the variety of topics provided by the service to cover other areas related to complex ADHD presentations.

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