



Research Snapshot No. 5

September 2022

Garnett, R., Davidson, B., & Eadie, P. (2022). Parent perceptions of a group telepractice communication intervention for autism.

What you need to know:

Evidence suggests that early intervention, involving collaboration between practitioners, family, and the child's significant others, can be effective at improving communication and adaptive functioning, and potentially impact cognitive development and autism symptoms. Furthermore, research indicates that parent implemented intervention can increase intervention consistency and intensity.

However, identified barriers to access include availability of providers, geographical factors, time constraints, and parental stress. Limitations in professional understanding of ways to support family engagement can also impact participation in intervention. Some of these barriers have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Telepractice may mitigate barriers, by increasing availability of services and decreasing the time and costs associated with face-to-face delivery. Previous research focused on children with autism has shown that telepractice is acceptable to parents, although there is limited research on telepractice services for parent groups programs.

What is this article about?

The purpose of the research was to build an understanding of parent's intervention preferences to inform future service offerings, increase choice, and support participation.

The research aimed to investigate parent perceptions, parent and child outcomes, and stress of parents participating in an autism specific, early social-communication intervention which utilised a group telepractice service delivery approach.

What did the researcher do?

Eleven parents of preschool children with autism participated in a telepractice delivered Hanen More Than Words group program. The intervention followed the manualized programme format (Sussman et al., 2016). A pre-programme consultation was followed by 11 weeks of intervention comprising eight, 150-min group parent training sessions interspersed with three, 60-min individual video feedback sessions. Parents created home practice plans during group sessions and video-feedback was delivered using adult coaching methods.

Quantitative and qualitative measures were used to evaluate parent perceptions of the telepractice Hanen More Than Words intervention. Pre and post data was collected using the Parenting Stress Index (Abidin, 2012), programme evaluation forms, and an online parent survey.

What did the researcher find?

- Parents reported high levels of satisfaction with telepractice delivered Hanen More Than Words.
- Key supports to learning included interactive learning opportunities, group participation, video coaching, individualisation of service, and programme facilitation.
- Parents perceived increased insight into the interaction, learning, and behaviour of themselves and their children. Parents also reported positive changes in strategy implementation and confidence and perceived improvements in their children's communication, responsiveness, interaction, and play following intervention.
- Parental stress measurements from pre- to post intervention, were not significantly different

How can you use this research?

Practitioners can consider the expansion of a traditional face to face group intervention programmes such as Hanen More Than Words to telepractice. Consideration should be given to the availability of suitably trained and resourced service providers to be able to support parent engagement with the service.

Where to from here?

Two helpful websites:

- The Hanen Centre <http://www.hanen.org/Home.aspx>
- Raising Children Network <https://raisingchildren.net.au/>

This article is part of a broader research programme. The other two components aimed to establish the feasibility of the group telepractice delivery approach and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. These two studies have been published (Garnett et al., 2019; Garnett et al., 2022).

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This Research Snapshot was prepared by Dr Kerry Bull, PRECI committee member and Early Childhood and Early Intervention Consultant.

In the spirit of reconciliation PRECI acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.