

### **Article Title**

SPORTS STARS: a practitioner-led, peer-group sports intervention for ambulant, school-aged children with cerebral palsy. Parent and physiotherapist perspectives

### **Article Citation**

Clutterbuck, G. L., Auld, M. L., & Johnston, L. M. (2020). SPORTS STARS: a practitioner-led, peer-group sports intervention for ambulant, school-aged children with cerebral palsy. Parent and physiotherapist perspectives. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 1-10.

### **Adaptive Sport/Recreation Categories**

- Recreation
- Sports/Physical Activity Performance

**Study Type:** Exploratory perspective study

### **Summary**

The SPORTS STARS intervention was developed to be a practitioner-led, peer-group, participation-focused, sports intervention. The SPORTS STARS intervention was an 8-week sports program with one 1-hour session each week. It combined sports-specific gross motor activity training, sports education, teamwork development and confidence building for four sports: soccer, netball, T-ball and cricket (2 weeks per sport).

The perspectives of parents and physiotherapists on the acceptability and perceived effectiveness of the intervention were collected in this study. Following the completion of SPORTS STARS by 39 children aged 6-12 years with cerebral palsy (CP) at GMFCS Level I or II, 29 families and eight therapists responded to an online survey of their overall perspectives of the intervention. Nine therapists, including the eight that responded to the survey, completed session reports on individual child progress at each session, documenting: Session Attendance, Session Involvement, Physical Activity Competence, and Cognitive Activity Competence; with open-ended comments added.

Many parents and physiotherapists indicated that having the opportunity to attend a sports-focussed activity was a benefit for the child. The design of the intervention fostering involvement and enjoyment of the sports activities was also seen as a benefit. Both parents and therapists agreed that the child's physical, social, and psychological competence improved with the intervention. Both parents and therapists expressed that the social aspect of the peer-group sports participation experience increased the child's involvement and enjoyment of the experience. Psychologically, both parents and therapists noted that children showed increased confidence while some parents highlighted that the improved confidence may be as important, if not more important than the physical improvements.

With regards to acceptability, both parents and therapists had positive perceptions of the SPORTS STARS and both preferred a peer-group format over individual when administering this intervention. Parents and therapists differed slightly in terms of the location, with the parents indicating an outdoor community location highly acceptable for their children and therapists preferring an indoor community-based sports facility.

This study showed that parents and physiotherapists considered SPORTS STARS, a peer-group sports intervention, to be an acceptable, enjoyable, and effective intervention for children with CP (GMFCS Level I or II).

### **Article Strengths**

- Studied aspects of participation consistent with the constructs in the family of Participation Related Constructs (fPRC) model (Attendance and Involvement)
- Presented the perspectives of the family and the therapists of the child
- Considered both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the child's improvements as viewed by the parents and the therapists
- Followed a well-documented RCT with a published intervention protocol

### **Article Weaknesses**

- No variety in sports, limited to four types of sports (ie. soccer, netball, T-ball, cricket)
- No measurement for the change of mobility
- Does not consider the perspectives of the child
- No information/data on parents/therapists who did not respond to the survey
- Article itself does not state any potential biases, weaknesses, and/or limitations

### **Take Home Messages**

- SPORTS STAR, a peer-group sports intervention, was acceptable, enjoyable, and effective for ambulant children with CP in improving sports participation and sports activity competence

### **Impacts on Clinical Practice:**

- Participation-focused sports interventions can help improve both participation and sports activity competence
- Participation, as per the fPRC model should be utilized when designing studies
- Perspectives (quantitative and qualitative) of the parents and therapists are valuable and essential in supporting research outcomes