Development and Implementation of 6, 1-hour Group Educational Classes for Parents of Children with Cerebral Palsy

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Background
When a child receives a diagnosis of cerebral palsy (CP), it impacts the entire family. Ensuring everyone receives the support and resources necessary is vital to the health of the child and their family.

Parents of children with CP have lower levels of quality of life. Poor quality of life is correlated with a low level of self-efficacy or the sense of personal control over the care situation. Over 50% of parents of children with CP express a need for more information on services, future planning, community activities and personal time to improve care for their child. Providing parents with more knowledge may improve self-efficacy.

A 25-minute educational program designed to improve the knowledge of parents of children with CP significantly improved their understanding of many but not all basic topics. A more in-depth program, spaced over a number of weeks, may enhance learning, provide time for question development, and allow for multiple interactions between parents fostering a relationship that can be a source of life long support.

Objective
To describe the development and implementation of 6, 1-hour group educational classes for parents of children with CP designed to improve understanding of the diagnosis, therapeutic interventions, and community resources.

Description
The process used to develop and implement group educational classes for parents of children with cerebral palsy included the following steps:

Parent Survey: A survey was distributed via email to the parents of children with cerebral palsy. It gathered information on the following: topics important to the family, information they wished they had known sooner, the most helpful information they had gathered so far, the most frustrating aspects of the diagnosis, and what they would include if they were conducting the class. The results of the survey were used to determine the topics covered during the class.

Literature Review: A literature review was conducted focusing on the topics identified as being important from the parent survey. The results of the literature review were combined with clinical experience to create 6, 1-hour classes. Brief descriptions of each class can be found below.

Class 1: What is CP: This class covered the definition of cerebral palsy. It also covered the types of cerebral palsy including areas of the body affected and variations in muscle tone, as well as levels of function as measured by the GMFCS and MACS.

Class 2: Therapy Evaluation Techniques and Goal Setting: This class reviewed how to access therapy services and components of an evaluation including measurement of tone, strength, balance, and range of motion. Common tests utilized including the GMFM, PEDI, and various walk tests were covered. A discussion of how family members can help therapists set measureable and meaningful goals occurred.

Class 3: Therapy Treatment Strategies and Frequency of Care: This class included treatment techniques used to improve range of motion, strength, balance, and functional mobility. It also reviewed the various frequencies of treatment offered at our hospital and when each may be appropriate.

Class 4: Intensive Treatment Programs Offered Locally: This class reviewed the intensive programs offered locally including CIMT, aquatics, treadmill training, and an intensive motor learning based therapy program.

Class 5: Equipment and How to Obtain It: This class reviewed equipment options to maximize function for the lower extremities and upper extremities. The process of obtaining equipment locally was also reviewed.

Class 6: Community Resources, Funding, Support Groups, Adaptive Sports, and Experiences Parent Perspective: This class focused on providing information about community resources, funding for therapies and equipment, and accessing support groups and adaptive sports. In addition, an experienced parent of a child diagnosed with cerebral palsy was brought in to discuss parenting a child with special needs.

Significance
This poster provides a template for other organizations to implement educational classes for parents of children with CP. Providing educational classes conducted over several weeks is a novel idea that addresses the needs for more information. The classes may improve parent’s knowledge base, ability to locate resources, and social support ultimately impacting the entire family’s quality of life. Further research is needed to confirm the impact of the classes and to identify the ideal method of delivery of the information.

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References