

OP 25: Effect of a play-based training program on interactive skills of caregivers of children with autism

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Introduction: Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have impairments in social communication and interaction skills and show restricted repetitive behaviors. Evidence shows that early detection and parent mediated intervention programs lead to better social communication and functional outcomes highlighting parents as the most natural human resource.

Objectives: To evaluate caregiver acquisition of interaction skills to engage with children aged 2-4 years with ASD during play following a parent training protocol and to describe associated socio-demographic factors

Methods: Thirty (30) caregivers of newly diagnosed children aged 24-48 months, attending a multidisciplinary clinic were recruited. A mixed method research including pre-post interventional study determined the acquisition of interactive skills following a 2 hour play based training program. Adapted Quality of Caregiver–Child Interactions for Infants and Toddlers (Q-CCIIT); checklist assessed pre-post caregiver-child interactions by 10-minutes video recordings of each child two weeks following the training. A questionnaire collected socio-demographic data. Data was analyzed using nonparametric tests by SPSS software.

Results: QCCIIT percentage of mean scores improved significantly in all 30 caregivers ($p < 0.005$) for all three areas assessed; support for social emotional development as an average 8.80 to 22.83, cognitive development 4.63 to 14.13 and language development 6.97 to 12.97. Age and education level of parents positively influenced the skills ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusions: There was a significant improvement of caregiver interaction skills. Social emotional skills improvement was also significant.

Keywords: ASD, care-giver, children, social communication.