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A Parental Training Program Using Group-Based Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Childhood Asthma Management in Pediatric Clinics in Hong Kong: Evaluating Parental Psychological Well-Being

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Introduction

Parents often experience a considerable level of psychological difficulties in caring for a child with asthma, leading to poor childhood asthma management. Addressing psychological difficulties through Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) has been shown to improve the psychological well-being of parents with acquired brain injuries, diabetes, and anorexia nervosa.

Objectives

This report presents the efficacy of a parental training program using group-based ACT for childhood asthma management, in comparison with an asthma educational talk, on the psychological well-being of parents assessed at six months post-intervention.

Methodology

A randomized controlled trial was conducted. Parents and their children aged 3-12 years with asthma were consecutively recruited in a public hospital in Hong Kong from January to July 2016. They were randomly assigned either to a four-weekly group-based ACT combined with childhood asthma education (ACT group) or an asthma educational talk plus three weekly telephone follow-ups (Control group). The goal of ACT was to facilitate parents in accepting psychological difficulties non-judgmentally and taking actions to achieve valued goals in childhood asthma management. The outcomes regarding the psychological flexibility and psychological adjustment to the child's asthma were assessed at baseline and at six months post-intervention.

Result

One hundred and sixty-eight parents (88.1% mothers) and their children with asthma (age M = 6.8) participated in the trial. The adjusted generalized estimating equations

showed significant time-by-group interaction effects in all parental outcomes (all ps ranged from $<.001$ to $.025$). When compared with the Control group, parents in the ACT group achieved significant improvements in psychological flexibility ($p<.001$) and better psychological adjustment to their negative emotions related to childhood asthma, including guilt and worry ($p=.002$), unresolved and anger ($p=.017$). This trial highlights the utility of ACT in parents of children with asthma on improving the parental psychological well-being.