

Article Title: Benefits and challenges of a telehealth eating and mealtime intervention for autistic children: Occupational therapy practitioners' perspectives

Authors: Hladik, L., St. John B., Carbery M., Gray M., Drew, JR., Ausderau, K. K.

Key Points:

- The Engaged Eaters Program (EEP) was switched from an in-home appointment to telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Some thought it was easier to have miscommunications over a computer and made it hard to share pictures and videos.
- Telehealth made it much harder to interact with the children and OTs felt like they couldn't really help the parents work with their children.
- Families were more likely to skip Telehealth appointments rather than in-person appointments.
- Telehealth allows for those who cannot travel to access a clinic.

Glossary:

Telehealth: Service used for online doctor's visits

Engaged Eaters Program (EEP): Feeding therapy program for autistic children.

Occupational Therapy (OT): Therapists that work to improve client's participation in daily activities

Autism: neurological and developmental disorder that affects how people interact with others, communicate, learn, and behave

Why this article matters:

This article examines the difference in families with autistic children who attend medical clinics online vs. in-person.

Description of the Study:

Participants were gathered through an online university search engine. Some participants also responded to fliers that were posted around town. These participants were then interviewed and asked questions such as "How often do caregivers help during a Telehealth

Article Title: Benefits and challenges of a telehealth eating and mealtime intervention for autistic children: Occupational therapy practitioners' perspectives

Authors: Hladik, L., St. John B., Carbery M., Gray M., Drew, JR., Ausderau, K. K.

appointment?" and also asked what challenges the therapists faced when working online. These interviews were then analyzed to identify themes in responses. These themes were then altered, and three primary themes were established:

- Changes for EEP-Telehealth delivery: how we talk and share information, OTs experience and decision-making
- Challenges for OTs and families: computer problems, not being in the same place, keeping children interested and missing appointments
- Benefits from Telehealth: more involvement from caregivers and reaching more families

Research Questions:

What changed moving the Engaged Eaters Program to Telehealth and what did occupational therapists think about it?

Important Results:

- Telehealth can help make care more equal by removing an appointment transportation boundary.
- Caregivers and Occupational Therapists share they need more training

How the results will be used:

The results will be used to help create good adaptations for Telehealth and how it is used. They also will be used to help create ideas for child engagement during online appointments. Finally, these results helped stress the importance of teaching caregivers how to help during online appointments.

Full Article Reference: Hladik, L., St. John, B., Carbery, M., Gray, M., Drew, JR., Ausderau, K. K. (2023). Benefits and challenges of a telehealth eating and mealtime intervention for autistic children: Occupational therapy practitioners' perspectives. *OTJR: Occupational Therapy Journal of Research*. 15394492231175069.