

Health Over the Life Course – Presentation Cover Page

Title: The Children's Health and Activity Modification Program (C.H.A.M.P.): Exploring the impact of a 4-week lifestyle intervention on obese children and their families

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Abstract:

**THE CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND ACTIVITY MODIFICATION PROGRAM (C.H.A.M.P.):
EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF A 4-WEEK LIFESTYLE INTERVENTION ON OBESSE CHILDREN AND
THEIR FAMILIES**

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Purpose: C.H.A.M.P., a 4-week day camp for obese children aged 8-14, was held during August 2008. The program included daily physical activity, dietary, and behavioural modification for children, and similarly-themed educational sessions for family members on weekends. The purpose of the present study was to explore the experiences of children and family members who participated in C.H.A.M.P.. Methods: This qualitative study enlisted a trained facilitator to moderate five focus groups immediately following the intervention. Children (n = 12) were allocated to 1 of 2 groups; parents (n = 17) were allocated to 1 of 3 groups. Following a semi-structured interview guide, each session was digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using inductive content analysis. Results: Preliminary analysis revealed that children enjoyed participating in physical activities progressively and felt that it got easier over time. Children reported that they felt more confident in themselves and their ability to try new activities; using positive self-talk and involving their families in healthy change were emphasized. Dietary themes for children included the importance of eating balanced meals, monitoring serving sizes, and moderation. Parents reported increased confidence in parenting skills, and greater awareness of their influence on family members. Goal setting, trust, and empowerment of children in decision making were also emphasized by parents. Conclusion: This pilot study offers unique insight into the perspectives of obese children and their families. Overall, the program was well-received and impacted participants positively. Results will be discussed in terms of their implications for continued program development and future implementation.

Keywords: childhood obesity; lifestyle intervention; diabetes prevention; physical activity

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The Children's Health and Activity Modification Program (C.H.A.M.P.)

Exploring the impact of a 4-week lifestyle intervention on obese children and their families



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PURPOSE

- To explore the experiences of children and family members who participated in C.H.A.M.P., a 4-week lifestyle intervention for obese children aged 8-14 and their families, held during August 2008
- The program included daily physical activity, dietary, and behaviour modification components for children, and similarly-themed educational sessions for family members on weekends



INTRODUCTION

- Approximately 1/4 of Canadian children and adolescents aged 2 to 17 years are overweight or obese¹
- Contributors to this epidemic include decreased physical activity and poor diet
- Overweight and obese children are more likely to be obese adults and develop diseases at a much younger age than healthy weight children²
- It is important to intervene in childhood when lifestyle behaviours are amenable to modification
- Due to the special challenges that obese children face, it is important that individualized care is provided for both the child and his/her family³

METHODS

- A trained facilitator moderated five, semi-structured focus groups throughout the first two weeks of September, 2008
- Children ($n = 12$) were allocated to 1 of 2 groups based on C.H.A.M.P. "teams"; parents ($n = 17$) were allocated to 1 of 3 groups
- Participants were asked about their experiences at C.H.A.M.P., and specifically their physical activity and nutrition behaviours, perceptions on group dynamics, and self-esteem
- Each session was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim
- Member checking⁴ occurred throughout each focus group to enhance the trustworthiness of the data
- Inductive content analysis independently by 2 researchers is ongoing; preliminary findings are presented below



FINDINGS

From the kids...

Preliminary findings show that:

- Children enjoyed participating in physical activities progressively and felt that it got easier over time
- They felt more confident in themselves, and their ability to try new activities and overcome challenges
- Distractions were important: if physical activity is fun there is less focus on the act itself
- Using positive self-talk and involving their families in healthy change were important
- Dietary themes for children included the importance of eating balanced meals, following Canada's Food Guide, monitoring serving sizes, and moderation

From the parents...

Preliminary findings show that:

- Parents reported increased confidence in parenting skills, and greater awareness of their influence on family members
- Trust and empowerment of children in decision making (e.g., grocery shopping) were emphasized
- Visual cues helped with developing healthy eating habits (e.g., reading nutrition information and posting meal plans)
- Planning ahead was important to parents regarding meals and physical activity
- Goal setting was helpful in bringing the family together

SELECTED QUOTATIONS

From the kids...

"...I discovered that I actually do have a willingness inside of me that I never really showed before."

"I'm not saying 'I can't' anymore..."

"I don't watch as much TV."

"Just because it's healthy, doesn't mean its got to taste bad."

"I can keep up with most of my friends now...I want to do soccer and stuff...and not kinda just like skip and read books which is kind of boring for me now..."

"...Now-a-days I'm gonna start doing squats and jumping on the spot when I watch my TV."

"Eat in moderation!"



From the parents...

"...my son runs everywhere now... I've started running... and he's gone running with me on weekends too!"

"I didn't believe my eyes that this is my daughter. She's jumping up and down, and she's happy, and she's saying, 'Momma, I found it. Finally I found the people who are like me, they are overweight and they are not teasing me.'"

"I'm more conscious about me. ...I'm taking care of me and taking that time for me. You know? Because [the kids] see it."

"My son is very proud of himself and his accomplishments and shares it with absolutely everybody!...I don't think he ever thought that he could do it; and, I don't think he ever thought he could do it and enjoy it."

FINDINGS (cont'd)

More from the parents...

- Parents reported large improvements in their children's self-esteem and willingness to try new things thanks to C.H.A.M.P.
- Being in a group and around children who were similar physically, influenced the children positively

DISCUSSION

- Limited research exists that examines psychological factors (e.g., self-esteem) and the role of the family with respect to promoting behaviour change and success in the treatment and management of childhood obesity⁵
- The present qualitative study has provided an evidence base regarding the views of participants and families; these may serve to inform future interventions targeting childhood obesity⁵
- Based on our findings, C.H.A.M.P. appears to have a positive effect on both children and family members

CONCLUSION

Overall, the program was well-received and participants felt positively about their experiences; a larger study with more participants ($n=25$) occurred in August 2009. Analysis is ongoing; preliminary findings are revealing experiences and themes similar to those found in 2008.

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