

CHIP-Family to improve psychosocial wellbeing of young children with congenital heart disease and their families

van der Mheen M. (1), McCusker C.G. (2), van Beynum I.M. (1), Dulfer K. (1), van Galen E. (3), Bogers A.J.J.C. (1), Hillegers M.H.J. (1), Helbing W.A. (1), Utens E.M.W.J. (1,4,5) Erasmus MC - Sophia Children's Hospital, Rotterdam, The Netherlands (1); School of Applied Psychology, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland (2); Dutch Patient Association for Congenital Heart Disease, Maarssen, The Netherlands (3); Research Institute of Child Development and Education, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (4); Academic Centre for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry the Bascule/Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Academic Medical Centre, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (5)

Introduction: Children with congenital heart disease (CHD) are at increased risk for behavioral, emotional, and cognitive problems. They often have reduced stamina and participate less in sports. Moreover, parents of children with CHD are at risk for psychosocial problems. Therefore, a family-centered psychosocial intervention for CHD-children is needed. The previously developed 'Congenital Heart Disease Intervention Program (CHIP) – School' targeted parents only and resulted in non-significant, though positive, effects as to child psychosocial wellbeing. We expanded CHIP by adding a specific child module and including siblings, creating the multidisciplinary CHIP-Family intervention.

Methods: Ninety-three families of children with CHD (4-7 years old) participated in this single-blinded randomized controlled trial. Participants were randomized into CHIP-Family or care as usual. CHIP-Family consisted of a separate one-day parent and child workshop. The child workshop was provided by two psychologists and a physiotherapist and consisted of cognitive behavioral exercises and sports exercises. The parent workshop was provided by two psychologists and a pediatric cardiologist and focused on problem prevention therapy, psychoeducation, parenting skills, and medical issues. Approximately four weeks after the workshop, parents received an individual follow-up session. Baseline (T1) and follow-up assessments (T2=6 months after T1) consisted of questionnaires filled out by the child, parents, and teacher.

Results: The acceptability of the CHIP-Family program to the parents in the intervention group was assessed approximately 2 weeks after completing the program. On average, overall program satisfaction was rated with an 8 (on a scale of 1 to 10). Parents rated the explanation of the cardiologist (86.4%) and meeting other families of children with CHD (77.3%) as most helpful components of the program. Preliminary results with regards to the effect of CHIP-Family on child emotional and behavioral problems will be presented.

Conclusions: Multidisciplinary psychosocial interventions for families of children with CHD are needed. The CHIP-Family intervention has been positively evaluated by participating parents.