“Munch your Lunch!”: An innovative song-based interdisciplinary bespoke intervention for eating/drinking problems

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Background

- The Children’s Trust is the UK’s leading charity for children with brain injury
- A successful, last resort intervention was devised to increase the food and drink intake of an 8yr old boy, John
- Interdisciplinary collaboration between clinical psychology, speech & language therapy and music therapy enabled the design and implementation of a highly child-focused song-based intervention. The song was also implemented with active help from the child’s mother
- John suffered multiple physical and cognitive deficits as a result of a severe acquired brain injury
- John experienced a cardiac arrest secondary to an internal herniation of the bowel, causing hypoxic ischaemic encephalopathy
- Interdisciplinary working enabled John’s deficits to be scaffolded and the goal of increasing John’s weight to be achieved
- Intervention averted the need for surgical intervention via PEG insertion

Intervention embodies The Children’s Trust values

John’s views on the song
- “It was fun”
- “It was good”

Cecelia’s (Mum) views on the intervention
- “John was involved in control”
- “Inspiring John to do the job of eating”

Outcomes

- Clinically significant weight gain was achieved, averted the need for surgery
- The child displayed increased enjoyment and reduced anxiety around mealtimes
- Positive, collaborative relationships between child, parent and staff
- Improvement in functional abilities has been observed when music therapy has been used as part of an interdisciplinary program

Real World Gains

- The child continues to use this song at home to enhance eating behaviour

Parents Advice

- This approach could be used to “encourage children to achieve other needs [e.g. other rehabilitation tasks], through using music, like walking and exercising”

References

- Skuse D. (1993)

Therapeutic Song

A. Neuropsychology/ Clinical Psychology
B. Music Therapy
C. Speech & Language Therapy

A. Neuropsychology/ Clinical Psychology

The song provided a focus, compensating for severe visual and cognitive attentional deficits. Lyrics (co-constructed with John) contained embedded instruction to sustain eating behaviours. Bear used a transitional object. Reduction in stress at mealtimes through increased mastery and autonomy. Musically intertwined sense of fun, excitement and engagement to mealtimes

Entainment, auditory cueing and initiation, rhythmic sustaining attention auditory cueing for the child to attend to eating, initiate chewing, swallowing, etc.

Choose one of two given choices at all times - cognition, control with being able to choose food and help with preparation and self-feeding, specific step-by-step guidelines

Delivery of the Intervention

8 x 30 minute lunch sessions over a course of 3 weeks were delivered involving family and nursing staff