

Characteristics/Determinants of families missing appointments and improving access to care for them

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Background

- Missed health care appointments, defined as “no show” or “cancellations within 24 hours” have a significant impact on children, families and health care systems:

Lost opportunities to learn about health promotion strategies and preventive measures

Inefficient use of clinician time and resources

Decreased quality of services and increased wait times

Higher costs, re-hospitalization and ER visits

Objectives

- Identify reasons and barriers that prevent children with neuromotor disabilities from attending health care appointments
- To develop recommendations that guide future interventions aimed at engaging and enabling children and their families in appointment keeping

Methods (qualitative descriptive study)

Study sample: Purposeful and maximum variation sampling

- 15 mothers who spoke English, missed two or more appointments in the past 12-24 months, and were receiving services for their child from the Neuromotor Program at Holland Bloorview

Identify perspectives and experiences of parents:

- One-on-one audio recorded telephone interviews guided by a semi-structured interview guide developed with input from families
- Interviews transcribed verbatim

Data analysis:

- Inductive thematic and content analysis

Participant characteristics

Parents – n(%)	15(100%) Mothers
Languages spoken - n(%)	12(80%) English 3(20%) Spanish, Tagalog, Portugese
Family structure – n(%)	11(73%) 2 parent family 4(27%) 1 parent family
Median age range	30-39 years
Travel Mode – n(%)	11(73%) Car 2(13%) Public Transit 2(13%) Wheel Trans
Mean # of appointments/month	5 appointments
Mean family annual income	\$48,750.00

“It’s not like we would like to miss it”

There are a number of factors like transportation, illness, family priorities that make appointment keeping challenging



Results

- Parents value and place high importance on their appointments at Holland Bloorview
- Getting to the rehab hospital was challenging** traffic, weather, costs and issues with public transit & wheel trans schedules, policies & access
- Children or other family members may become **unexpectedly ill** on the day of the appointment
- Having a **complex condition/multiple diagnosis** and/or **competing family priorities** made appointment keeping more difficult

We Can't Make It
“It was taking the bus ... it takes two hours to get there and in the time spent there and then two hours to get home ...
Yeah it's hard too when you're a single parent. It puts a lot of weight on you” .

My Child is Sick
“Sometimes they get sick all of a sudden. They just wake up with a fever. And we had to call and reschedule”.
“It's difficult to manage. To dress, to feed him before we go there ... that kind of thing”.

Pick and Choose
“So a lot of times it will be when I have other appointments for him. Sometimes... I have to pick and choose”.
“She could not take an absence day from school that day”.

Not a Good Time
“On this date you need to come. It's not really a negotiation. It's more like you're coming at this time”.
“My child is hospitalized a lot so she missed a lot and then she kind of gets forgotten.”

Implications

- Our findings report similar and contrasting findings to research about children who miss health care appointments
- Missing appointments causes distress for families due to missed opportunities for rehabilitation therapies, assessment, information, maintenance of the child/service provider relationship, support and challenges with rescheduling and long waits between appointments
- Missed appointments is a common experience across all families regardless of type of family, income or transportation mode
- Special strategies that enable appointment keeping among one-parent, low income and under resourced families is needed

Next Steps

- Promote increased awareness among staff of family barriers to attendance.
- Explore virtual care services and extended services hours
- Explore transportation support
- Find ways to improve the visit experience, scheduling ease and appointment reminders

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