Interventions for Individuals with a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

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Overview
• What does the research have to tell us at this time?
• What is Evidence-Based practice?
• Some ongoing intervention projects in Edmonton with effective collaborations
• The Intervention Network Action Team
• Next steps you can take

Current intervention research is:
• Limited
• Needed: The overall Canadian cost: $5.3 billion annually; prevalence rate in Canada is estimated at 1 in 100 people with an average annual cost of $21,642 per individual (Stade et al., 2009)
Challenges to research include:

• Lack of single profile that best defines needs of an individual affected by FASD
• Cross disciplinary nature of this disability – supports need to cross systems
• No framework to conceptualize intervention with this group

CURRENT RESEARCH IN FASD INTERVENTIONS

Researchers have found:

• Breaking the Cycle (BTC) is an intervention program for drug and alcohol abusing women and their children (2-3 years old)
• Addiction and mental health counselling, parenting, and early childhood intervention
• Results:
  – Benefits for both children who were prenatally exposed to alcohol and prenatally exposed to drugs were found

Researchers have found:
• Math intervention program for 3-10 year olds
• Intensive, interactive, and individualized math tutoring focused on cognitive functions, such as working memory and visual-spatial skills
• Results:
  – Improvement in math, caregiver knowledge and behaviour reported
  – Math gains maintained after six months


Researchers have found:
• Friendship training for 6-12 year olds
• Focused on rules of social behaviour, modeling, rehearsal, performance feedback, and coaching during play sessions with peers
• Results:
  – Parents saw increased appropriate social behaviour knowledge, social skills, and decreased problem behaviours
  – However, teachers did not report improvements in social skills and problem behaviours


Researchers have found:
• Verbal rehearsal training to increase memory span for 4-11 year olds
• Results:
  – The experimental group showed a significant increase in memory span across the three sessions; control group did not.
  – More children in the experimental group than the control group showed behavioural evidence and self-report of rehearsal after training

Researchers have found:

- Language and literacy training (LLT) program for children with FASD in South Africa for 9 year olds
- Emphasis on phonological awareness and other literacy skills involved in reading and spelling
- Results:
  - Improved language and literacy among children with FASD


Researchers have found:

- What the animals are telling us:
  - Enriched environments (Hannigan & Berman, 2000)
  - Motor training (Klintsova et al., 2002)
  - Exercise (Christie et al., 2005)
  - Dietary interventions (Ryan, et al., 2008)
  - can reduce the negative effects of prenatal alcohol exposure

Researchers have found:

- That we need more research!
EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

Is this relevant to us?
• Can we have evidence-based practice given the diversity of individuals affected by FASD?
• Terminology is inaccessible
• To begin answering this, let’s consider what evidence-based means

Evidence-Based Practice
• Evidence base for any intervention should be evaluated in terms of:
  ▪ Efficacy: strength of evidence pertaining to establishing causal relationships between interventions and identified concerns
  ▪ Clinical utility: consideration of the generalizability, feasibility, and costs and benefits of interventions
Bottom Line: What does this mean?

- We need to ask if what we are doing in service delivery is really working and how do we know – what’s our evidence?
- We need to be sure that our research efforts are well matched with community culture, resources, and needs
- Collaboration is key!

ONGOING EFFECTIVE COLLABORATIONS
Effective Collaboration: Examples

• The McDaniel Program
  ▪ Research embedded
  ▪ Reciprocity between service providers and researchers
  ▪ Materials used for research have program value

Effective Collaboration

• The Edmonton Public School Board
  ▪ Practice knowledge is valued
  ▪ Reciprocity exists
  ▪ Research is well informed
  ▪ Consequently all are invested and implementation and ongoing development is feasible

Challenges in building collaborations

• Where do I start?
• Where do I find the time?
• Who do I talk to?

.... There are no easy answers
CanFASD Research Network

Goal:
build research capacity across the Western Canadian Provinces and the Territories to improve FASD intervention policy, practice, and outcomes

Intervention Network Action Team

fundamental role:
"bridge building"– to develop and facilitate the meaningful connections, relationships and networks required to build research capacity and impact policy development and service delivery
CanFASD Research Network

What does this mean in practice:
• E-newsletter
• A hub to connect with – facilitates collaboration
• Support for proposal development
• Development of a framework for FASD intervention to help establish shared language and strategy

How can you get involved?
• E-newsletter
• Contact us – what’s your question?
• Identify a role for yourself
• Initiate a collaboration
• Seek opportunities for action
Questions?

Or email Jacquie at:
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