Caregivers Connecting after ABI (CCABI): Enhancing Caregiver Support, Coping, and Knowledge

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BACKGROUND
- Caregivers experience burden and family stress following their child’s acquired brain injury (ABI).¹
- Caregivers’ needs (e.g., ABI Information, coping skills, peer support) are often unmet despite them enhancing family functioning.²
- There is limited research on caregiver peer-support groups during inpatient rehabilitation.³
- Clinicians and family leaders at Holland Bloorview created an educational and psychosocial group for caregivers, Caregivers Connecting after ABI (CCABI) to address this gap.

OBJECTIVE
To evaluate the clinical utility of CCABI during families’ inpatient phase of rehabilitation.

INTERVENTION
- CCABI is co-facilitated by clinical neuropsychologists and a social worker.
- It is informed by research highlighting the necessity of caregiver support to ensure a healthy future for children with ABI.⁴
- Common CCABI topics include: Brain Education, Rehabilitation Journey, Nutrition, Back to School, Transitions.
- CCABI is a weekly drop-in group (1 hour sessions).

PARTICIPANTS
- 10 caregivers of children with ABI (children age range: 4-15 years).
- Type of ABI includes: brain tumour, stroke, multiple sclerosis and traumatic brain injury.
- Length of inpatient stay (range): 5-12 weeks.
- On average, caregiver participants attended five CCABI sessions.

METHODS
- Semi-structured interviews were conducted. Qualitative content analysis is utilized to identify themes from the data.

RESULTS
- Participants joined CCABI due to personal interest, recommendation from other caregivers, and for support.
- CCABI is a valuable group for caregivers to receive information and social support from facilitators and other caregivers with similar lived experience.
- CCABI was described as an outlet to share stories in a safe space.
- Feelings of validation and confidence were reported following CCABI participation.

Participants offered suggestions for program improvement:
- Increase the frequency and duration of CCABI group sessions.
- Enhance program advertisement.
- Ensure CCABI topics are relevant to caregivers.

IMPLICATIONS & RELEVANCE TO FAMILIES
- Integrating family needs into clinical rehabilitation helps to improve caregiver functioning.
- The study sheds light on supportive strategies to improve the well-being of families following a child’s brain injury.

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