



Early Literacy Reading Program Three - Year Analysis using the Before And After Books And Reading (BABAR)¹ Study Form

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Reach Out and Read

The Reach Out and Read (ROR) program is available to children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years receiving health care at the Children's Hospital of Orange County (CHOC) Ambulatory Clinic.

ROR began at Boston City Hospital in 1989 and is now in over 2000 sites nationwide. ROR is a national, non-profit organization that promotes early literacy by making books a routine part of pediatric care. ROR pediatricians have been prescribing books and reading aloud for their young patients with a special focus on children who have been identified with potential for low literacy and school failure.

The CHOC ROR program, like the national program, promotes early book exposure and book sharing among patients and families. The program has 3 linked interventions:¹

1. Anticipatory guidance about reading aloud provided as an integral part of health supervision visits, along with modeling and observation of parent-child book use.

2. Developmentally and culturally appropriate picture books given by the doctor/nurse/practitioner at each health supervision visit so that parents are both encouraged to read aloud and have the tools to do so.



ROR (continued)

3. Community volunteers who read to the children in the waiting room, modeling developmentally appropriate techniques for the parents.



Background

According to the National ROR Center, picture book sharing is associated with advanced language and literacy skills. Experimental studies support a causal link between children's language and parent book-sharing practices. These studies further indicate that these practices can be influenced by educational interventions. For infants and toddlers, as well as preschool children, books provide a context for language and cognitive development related to literacy acquisition and school success (Needham et al., 1991).

Attention during book sharing is associated with secure attachment and increased 'emergent' or pre-literacy skills and decreased use of maternal discipline (Bux, et al., 1988).

Background (continued)

A causal connection has been demonstrated between parent-child book sharing and improved language outcomes in young children. Parent book sharing behaviors can be influenced by an educational intervention and guidance about book use can result in improved child language even among relatively well educated parents (Whitehurst, et al., 1985).



There is a long history of research linking reading aloud by parents with verbal language and literacy (Chomsky, 1972; Durkin, 1988; Snow & Goldfield, 1983; Stevenson & Friedman, 1990).

Problem

Research supports² that children with limited literacy skills have increased school drop-out rates, juvenile delinquency, gang activity, teen pregnancy and poor health. Literacy in adults translates to welfare dependency, decreased earning potential and despair. The problem perpetuates from generation to generation if not addressed.

The majority of the children served by the CHOC Ambulatory Clinic come from low socio-economic backgrounds. Many of the parents of these children have low literacy skills themselves.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the ROR program influences the literacy activities of our patient population.

Methods/Design

The BABAR Study format was used to assess the efficacy of the ROR program in our clinic. Data was collected using a parent interview format at 2 points in time: November 1999 (pre-ROR) control group; and 3 years after providing books, anticipatory guidance and modeling reading (post-ROR/experimental group).

Interviews were conducted by either Dr. Grover or a pediatric resident utilizing a translator when appropriate.

A convenience sample of children ages 6 months to 6 years was used. Parents were interviewed in the CHOC Clinic Waiting Room. Children with severe central nervous system injury or disability were excluded, as were children weighing less than 1500 grams.

Results

The pre-ROR data was collected in 1999 (control group). The post-ROR data was collected in 2003.

• 27 families were interviewed pre and post ROR.

• 3 questions reached statistical significance:

1. Does reading to your child now help prepare him for success in school?
In 1999 21% answered yes. (p=0.003)
In 2003 63% answered yes. (p=0.003)
2. Do you ever read to your child?
In 1999 75% answered yes. (p=0.002)
In 2003 100% answered yes. (p=0.002)
3. How many days per week do you read to your child?
In 1999 32% answered 'every day'. (p=0.01)
In 2003 100% answered 'every day'. (p=0.01)

Conclusions

This study demonstrated that over the 3 years that the Reach Out and Read program has been operational at CHOC's Ambulatory Clinic, there have been statistically significant improvements in the percentage of parents reading to their children, and the number of days per week they read. In addition, parents are also recognizing that this early book sharing prepares their children for school and teaches them that books and reading are important.

Due to the success of this program at the CHOC Primary Care Ambulatory Clinic, it has been expanded to include the CHOC Outreach programs and clinics: CHOC Mobile Health Vans, Clinica Para Niños (~80% Spanish speakers), CHOC Clinic at Boys & Girls Club in Santa Ana, CHOC Clinic in Costa Mesa, and CHOC Clinic at Boys & Girls Club in Garden Grove (open 9/05).

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