

Working with mothers and in early childhood settings: tips from the coalface




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Acknowledgements


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Outline

- Barriers & experiences/tips:
 - ◆ Recruitment
 - ◆ Retention
 - ◆ Measurement
 - ◆ Running programs



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Recruitment - barriers

- Access
- Engagement (parents)
busy, changing circumstances
- Engagement (centres)
PA not on agenda



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Recruitment - strategies

- Access:
 - ◆ Hospitals
 - ◆ MCHNs
 - ◆ Existing social groups (1st time mums, playgroups)
 - ◆ Childcare
 - ◆ Preschool / kindergarten
 - ◆ Age-specific activities e.g. swimming lessons

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Recruitment - strategies


- Engagement (parents):
 - ◆ Appeal to desire for information & assistance
 - ◆ Make participation easy
 - ◆ Contact with researchers
- Engagement (centres):
 - ◆ Get governing body support
 - ◆ Centre Director to promote study

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Retention - barriers

- Changing circumstances
e.g. return to work; pregnancy
- Engagement
e.g. busy
- Unstable populations
e.g. move out of area; change childcare



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Retention - strategies

- Changing circumstances:
 - ◆ Predict & develop program accordingly
 - ◆ Acknowledge associated difficulties
 - ◆ Make participation easy
- Engagement:
 - ◆ Make participation easy & worthwhile
 - Know your target audience
 - Make program relevant to needs
 - Respond to feedback

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Retention - strategies

- Unstable populations:
 - ◆ Expect this and plan for it
 - home visits / phone delivery
 - alternative contact details
 - notification of change of contact details



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Measurement - barriers

- Lack of age-appropriate tools
- Rapid developmental change (different tools across life of study)
- Environmental challenges (space etc)
- Subject compliance (child)
- Subject compliance (parent)

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Measurement - strategies

- Lack of age-appropriate tools
 - ◆ Field is progressing
 - ◆ Develop or modify
 - ◆ Take opportunities to validate
- Rapid developmental change (different tools across life of study)
 - ◆ Objective measures
 - ◆ Between group differences rather than longitudinal

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Measurement strategies


- Environmental challenges:
 - ◆ Field staff with good lateral thinking!
 - ◆ Be flexible; work with what's there
 - ◆ Safety is paramount



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Measurement - strategies

- Subject compliance (child):
 - ◆ Additional staff to assist with measurements
 - ◆ Enlist parent / centre staff (modelling & logistic support)
 - ◆ Small gifts (e.g. stickers)
 - ◆ Female assessors
 - ◆ Appeal to imagination (accelerometers give magical powers!)



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Measurement - strategies

- Subject compliance (parent):
 - ◆ Provide alternative options for physical measurements (at home, self report)
 - ◆ Try to have some direct contact
 - ◆ Follow-up, follow-up, follow-up!

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Running programs - barriers

- Lack of attendance at sessions
- Children at sessions
- Pitching age-appropriate messages
- Sensitive subject area - parenting!
- Engaging early childhood staff

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Running programs - strategies

- Lack of attendance at sessions:
 - ◆ Make program relevant and useful
 - ◆ Work with time & venue that suits attendees
 - ◆ Reminder calls beforehand
 - ◆ Provide materials in alternate form (take-home)

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Running programs - strategies

- Children at sessions:
 - ◆ Be flexible!
 - ◆ Provide child component
 - ◆ Allow extra time
 - ◆ Be inclusive (e.g. even children not involved in the study can 'have a go')



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Running programs - strategies

- Pitching age-appropriate messages:
 - ◆ Be mindful of the range of ages and developmental stages
 - ◆ Instructions and tasks that can be modified for different cognitive abilities of the children
 - ◆ Messages that can be adapted for different ages

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Running programs - strategies

- Sensitive subject area – parenting:
 - ◆ Acknowledge it's difficult
 - ◆ Allow parents to raise barriers and discuss strategies others have used
 - ◆ Be mindful of different values and circumstances
 - ◆ Take a 'gentle' approach – don't alienate

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Running programs - strategies

- Early childhood staff:
 - ◆ Professional development for all (understand importance; develop confidence & skills)
 - ◆ Develop simple programs with a clear purpose
 - ◆ Work within the centre setting (align with shifts; values of centre)



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Melbourne InFANT Program

- Cluster RCT
- Child obesity prevention program for first-time parents
- Focused on parenting skills for infants aged 3-18 mths related to:
 - ◆ Diet
 - ◆ Physical activity
 - ◆ Sedentary behaviours
- Anticipatory guidance approach

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Program structure

- 6 x 2hr sessions
- Underpinned by DVD
- Supported with a range of handouts
- Reinforced with a handout between sessions
- Emphasis on reinforcing key slogans



Getting it right from the start!
Eating and active play for your baby

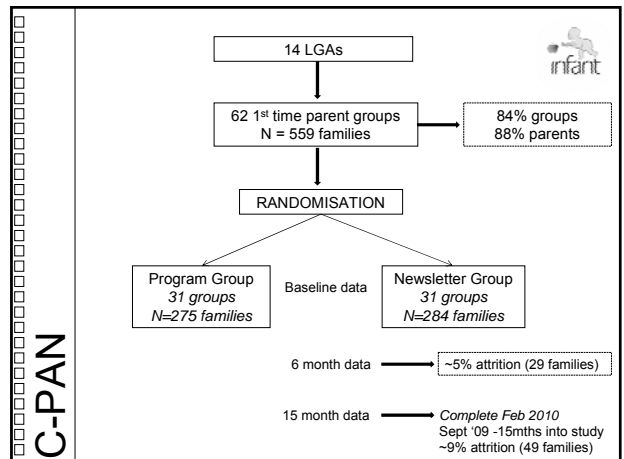


Table 1: Attendance, retention, and perceived usefulness* of InFANT sessions 1 to 4 by SEP

	(%)		
	Low SEP	Medium SEP	High SEP
Attendance	64	74	69
Retention	89	94	90
How useful was ...			
...the session overall?	96	88	87
...the information your group leader talked about?	96	89	90
...information other parents in your group talked about?	87	82	74
...the InFANT DVD?	89	79	73
...the written information you received in your last session?	92	82	78
...relevance of this session to you and your family?	93	89	88

*Percentage of parents who found sessions 'quite' or 'very' useful

Melbourne InFANT Program team



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