

Group-based parent training programmes improve the short-term psychosocial wellbeing of parents but impact is not sustained



Parent training has positive short-term effects on depression, anxiety, stress, anger, guilt, confidence and partner satisfaction

What is the aim of this review?

This Campbell systematic review examines the effects of group-based parenting programmes on parents' psychosocial health. The review summarises findings from 48 studies conducted in various countries and settings including the USA, Canada, Australia, U.K., China, Germany, Japan, New Zealand and The Netherlands. The participants were adult parents with the parental responsibility for day-to-day care of children. A total of 4,937 participants were included in the studies.

Parenting programmes have been shown to have an impact on the emotional and behavioural adjustment of children. This review addresses the impact of parenting programmes on the psychosocial wellbeing of parents. The evidence shows positive effects on short-term psychosocial wellbeing, but the impact is not sustained. More research is needed to examine the effectiveness of different programmes to ensure that improvements in parental psychosocial health are maintained over time.

What did the review study?

The psychosocial health of parents can significantly affect the parent-child relationship, with consequences for the future psychosocial health of the child. So parenting programmes can affect a child's emotional and behavioural adjustment of children both directly through the impact on the child and indirectly through the impact on the parent.

This review examines the impact of group-based parenting programmes on aspects of parental psychosocial health such as anxiety, depression, guilt and confidence.

Which studies are included in this review?

Included studies report outcomes of three types of programme: behavioural, cognitive-behavioural and multimodal, using randomized controlled trials that compared a parenting programme with a control condition (waiting-list, no treatment, treatment as usual, or a placebo control group). The studies had to have used at least one measure of parental psychosocial health. Studies that targeted teenage parents and parents with a diagnosed psychiatric disorder were excluded.

A total of 48 studies consisting of 4,937 participants were included in the final evaluation. The studies were conducted in a wide range of settings and countries including



How up-to-date is this review?

The review authors searched for studies published until December 2011. This Campbell Systematic Review was published in September 2012.

What is the Campbell Collaboration?

The Campbell Collaboration is an international, voluntary, non-profit research network that publishes systematic reviews. We summarise and evaluate the quality of evidence about programmes in the social and behavioural sciences. Our aim is to help people make better choices and better policy decisions.

About this summary

This summary was prepared by Ada Chukwudozie and Howard White (Campbell Collaboration) based on the Campbell Systematic Review 2012:15 Group-based parent training programmes for improving parental psychosocial health by Jane Barlow, Nadja Smailagic, Nick Huband, Verena Roloff and Cathy Bennett (DOI 10.4073/csr.2012.15). Copy-editing and layout was done by Tanya Kristiansen (Campbell Collaboration). Financial support from the American Institutes for Research for the production of this summary is gratefully acknowledged.



the USA, Canada, Australia, U.K, China, Germany, Japan, New Zealand and The Netherlands.

The majority of interventions (36) studied were of 'standard' duration (8 to 14 sessions), whereas ten were 'brief' (1 to 6 sessions) and two 'long' (16 weeks or more).

What are the main results in this review?

Parent training has positive short-term effects on depression, anxiety, stress, anger, guilt, confidence and partner satisfaction. There was no effect on self-esteem and none of the trials reported on aggression or adverse effects.

However, after six months there are positive effects on only two outcomes (stress and confidence), and after one year there are no significant effects on any outcomes.

The data refer primarily to mothers as there are limited data on fathers. Only one meta-analysis was conducted for fathers, showing a statistically significant short-term improvement in parental stress.

There was no significant difference in effects according to the type of programme or intervention duration.

What do the findings in this review mean?

The main results presented in this review provide sufficient evidence to support the use of parenting programmes to improve parental psychosocial wellbeing.

However, because the findings show that the improvements are short-term, parents may require additional support to maintain these improvements. Therefore, more research that provides evidence of the comparative effectiveness of different types of programmes, along with the mechanisms by which such programmes bring about improvements in parental psychosocial functioning is needed. Furthermore, the limited evidence available suggests that parenting programmes could improve the psychosocial wellbeing of fathers as well as mothers. Thus further research that explicitly addresses the benefits of parental programmes for fathers is needed.