Evaluation of a Psychoeducation Group for Children presenting with Functional Tics

Zoe Pearman, Sacha Evans, Isobel Heyman, Maria Hadji-Michael, Nimmi Parikh, Eve McAllister, Amy Warren, Sara Shavel-Jessop, Tara Murphy, Sophie Allen, Shauna O’Dwyer, Katie Harrold, Holan Liang and Morwen Duncan. Tic Disorders Service, Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, London, United Kingdom

Background

- Rapid-onset functional tic-like behaviours (FTLBs) have increased in children and adolescents since COVID-19.1
- FTLBs appear to be related to underlying depression, stress, and/or anxiety.2
- The evidence base for interventions to treat FTLBs is limited.
- Clinical interventions are pragmatic with a focus on psychoeducation.
- Goal-based outcomes (GBOs) allow children with functional movement disorder to set their own targets and measure change post-intervention.3

Objectives

To evaluate a one-off 2 ½ hour psychoeducational group intervention on functional tics, measuring change in patient centred goals.

Methods

- A novel psychoeducational group intervention was developed for children, parents and professionals.
- GBOs collected before and after the group.
- Achievement of goals rated on a scale of 0 (not at all) to 10 (fully met).
- Additional feedback was gathered after the group.
- 51 families attended 5 groups from May 2021 to April 2022.
- 38 GBOs.
- 31 feedback responses were collected.

Results

- Responses to psychoeducation are positive.
- Young people and their parents reported significant improvement in their goals following the group.
- t(26) = 6.88, p <0.001, Cohen’s d = 1.89, a large effect size.

Discussion

- The Psychoeducation group for functional tics is accessible and feasible.
- Understanding the diagnosis is central to therapeutic intervention.
- Local professionals who attended had increased awareness of functional tics.
- Changes to the group have been made based on feedback.
- Future research to explore ethnic diversity within the population.