Effectiveness of a Multimedia Outreach Kit for Families of Wounded Veterans


**SUMMARY:** An evaluation of a Sesame Workshop multimedia kit called: Talk, Listen, Connect: Changes (TLC-II©) was conducted. The kit, included video and print materials, aimed to help caregivers (i.e., at-home partner, at-home relative or family member of a current or discharged military member) assist young children as they adjusted to their parent’s injury. Group outcomes were compared four weeks following receipt of the kits.

**KEY FINDINGS:**
- All materials were well used and highly rated by both test groups.
- All caregivers reported less social isolation, less child aggression, and significantly less disruptive home environments after kit use.
- Test group caregivers reported significantly greater reductions in depressive symptoms and significant increases in children’s social competence over time in comparison to the control group.
- As a preventative intervention designed for families with an injured member, TLC-II© was particularly effective at improving coping.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:**
Programs could:
- Diversify the use of materials like the TLC-II©, integrating them into early intervention processes as part of a full continuum of care for children
- Provide tools that assist parents and promote their self-efficacy in caring for their child post-injury, while also providing engagement and information for children
- Continue dedicating multimedia outreach materials to caregivers and children that help them cope with a family member’s life changing injury

**IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:**
Policies could:
- Extend policies that include support for injured parents’ children and other family members
- Encourage awareness campaigns among military families and their support networks about the effects of injury on children and family members
- Continue to support organizations that focus on military families and their young children’s development and well-being

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METHODS
- Participants were recruited through flyers posted at or near Veterans Administration polytrauma centers, websites, and contacts made at military and Veteran events.
- Test group families received the TLC-II©kit, which included trauma-informed content specific to having a Service member parent return with a wound or injury. Control group families received the Healthy Habits for Life kit, which focused on habits for healthy living.
- Structured interviews of caregivers lasting 20-30 minutes were conducted.
- Comparisons of caregiver and child outcomes between the test and control groups were conducted using t-tests for continuous variables and chi-squared tests for categorical variables.

PARTICIPANTS
- The final sample comprised 153 caregivers, 75 in the test group and 78 in the control group.
- Participants were caregivers of a child between the ages of 2 and 8 who did not have any special needs whose parent had suffered an injury during their most recent deployment.
- Almost all of the recruited caregivers (93%) were married, 63% were younger than 35, and most were either White or Hispanic.
- Eighty-three percent of the injured family members were on Active Duty with 63% in the Army and 27% in the Marine Corps and had been deployed between one and three times.

LIMITATIONS
- The sample was drawn from one site; therefore, we cannot assume it was representative.
- Analysis did not account for children’s demographics or perspective which could have effects on the outcomes (both short and long-term).
- While the study employed a randomized design, data were collected only twice, and only four weeks apart. It is difficult to know what the longer term outcomes may be.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH
Future research could:
- Include interviews with the injured parents’ or other family members’ perspectives on the child’s outcomes after the parent’s injury
- Collect data on child outcomes to see what long-term affects the program may have
- Examine program effects on injured parent-child relationships

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