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# Caregiver Perspectives on Body-Weight Supported Treadmill Training as an Intervention for Young Children with Cerebral Palsy

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## PURPOSE & HYPOTHESIS

- Children with cerebral palsy (CP) in Gross Motor Function Classification System (GMFCS) levels IV & V present with challenges that impact their functional activities & participation in family activities.
- Body weight supported treadmill training (BWSTT) may improve motor control for children with neuromotor disabilities (Morgan et al 2016, Mattern-Baxter et al 2009)
- Caregiver perspectives on this intense intervention are worth exploring (Kruijisen-Terpstra et al 2016, Beveridge et al 2015, Knis-Matthews et al 2011)
- **The purpose of this study was to examine caregivers' perspectives on body-weight supported treadmill training (BWSTT) as an intervention for their young children with CP.**

## Participants

- Participants included 4 caregivers of 3 children (2 parents of 1 child & 1 parent each of 2 children) with CP in GMFCS levels IV & V who previously participated in 6 wks of BWSTT, 3 x/ wk,
- Participating children were 2 to 3 yrs old, each presenting with different type of CP: spastic diplegia (GMFCS level IV), spastic triplegia (GMFCS level IV), & spastic quadriplegia (GMFCS level V),

Participant	Age	Gender	Race/ethnicity	Relationship to child	Total # children at home
"L"	38 yrs	Female	White	Adoptive Mother (Child 1)	1
"M"	34 yrs	Female	White	Birth Mother (Child 1)	1
"A"	41 yrs	Female	Hispanic	Adoptive Mother (Child 2)	2
"G"	46 yrs	Female	Asian	Birth Mother (Child 3)	2

## METHODS

### INTERVIEW:

- The caregivers of the children were asked to participate in face to face semi-structured interviews after the BWSTT intervention ended with their children.
- Interviews were audio recorded & transcribed.
- Interviews lasted between 20 to 40 minutes.
- Each participant was interviewed one-on-one (no other family members present).
- Analysis of the interviews was conducted through open coding to identify emerging categories by the principal investigator.
- A secondary investigator independently coded 50% of the transcripts to triangulate the coding for trustworthiness.
- The two investigators then discussed the codes & categories until an agreement was reached to identify the emergent themes & an overarching theme.

## RESULTS

### OVERARCHING THEME:

*Acceptance of the journey*

### THREE EMERGENT THEMES:

#### Caregiving

- Support system
- Physical & emotional strain
- Routines

#### Future outlook

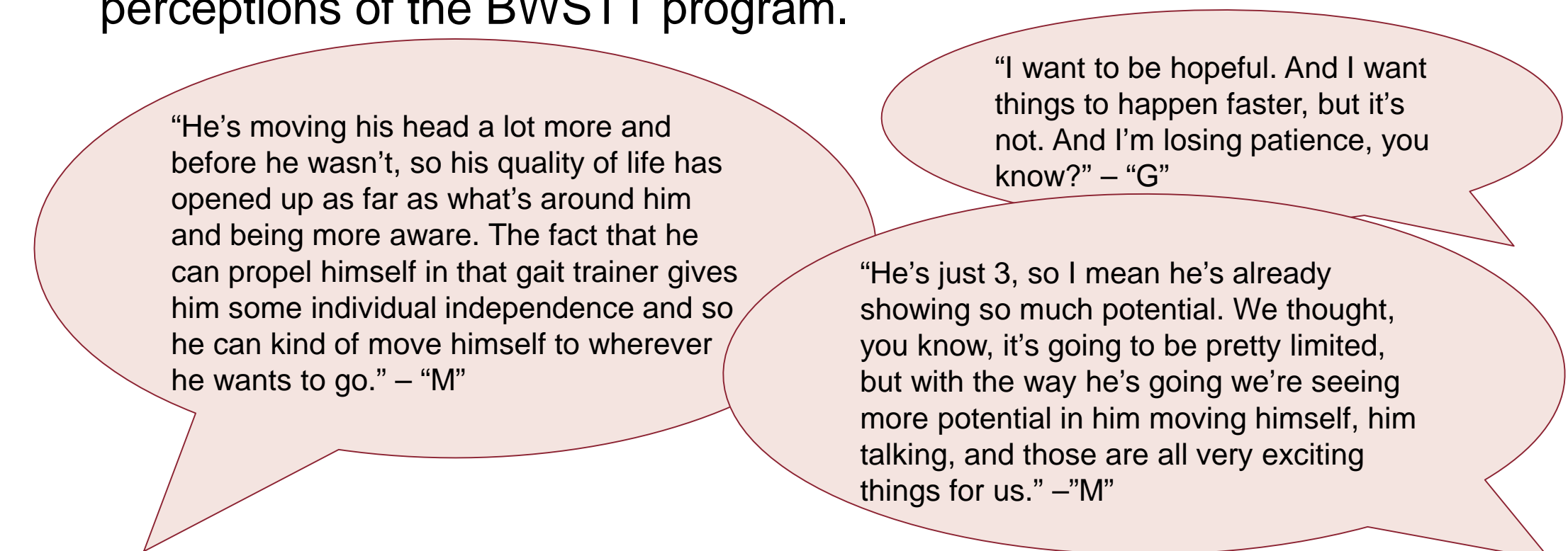
- Optimism
- Facing challenges
- Fears & worries

#### Importance of therapies

- Traditional physical therapy (PT)
- BWSTT
- Other therapies more important than PT

## RESULTS

- Caregivers were able to transport children to the BWSTT intervention with an average attendance rate of 94%.
- Careful triangulation of the interview data led to the identification of 3 common themes & 1 overarching theme based on caregiver perceptions of the BWSTT program.



## CONCLUSIONS

- The caregivers reported that after the BWSTT intervention, their children improved in motivation to walk, & with head/trunk control.
- Caregivers of the children all expressed the desire to continue the program & stated that they would participate again if given the chance.
- They also emphasized the importance of other therapies to address issues such as feeding & communication.

## CLINICAL RELEVANCE

- Caregivers are likely to take time out of their busy schedules to pursue PT treatments that they view as effective in improving their child's gross motor function.
- Although PT is perceived as vital to their child's progress, it is a small part of the overall journey for these families.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the caregivers who consistently brought their children to the clinic, participated in the interviews, & trusted us through this process.