

CFAHR Evidence Brief

Can children experiencing issues eating and drinking be assessed via telepractice?

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Alignment with [Metro South Health Research Strategy 2019 - 2024](#)

- Build research capability
- Increase research capacity
- Embed research in clinical services
- Translate research to better health
- Research excellence

Alignment with [Allied Health Research Capability & Development Strategy 2017 - 2020](#)

- Engage staff as research consumers
- Enable staff as research generators
- Build research-enabling infrastructure and strategic processes
- Strengthen leadership in research and innovation
- Enhance internal research collaboration and synergy
- Strengthen partnerships with consumers and external stakeholders

Alignment with [Allied Health Research Capability & Development Strategy 2017 - 2020](#)

- Standard 1 – Clinical Governance
- Standard 2 – Partnering with consumers
- Standard 3 – Preventing and controlling healthcare-associated infection
- Standard 4 – Medication safety
- Standard 5 – Comprehensive care
- Standard 6 – Communicating for safety
- Standard 7 – Blood management
- Standard 8 – Recognising and responding to acute deterioration

Practice Issue

Accurate and timely assessment and management of paediatric feeding disorders is important due to their potential negative impact on children's health, nutrition and development. However, children's access to feeding services can be impacted by a range of factors including distance and travel, impact on other activities (e.g. school), local service availability and clinician experience/ confidence. Telepractice has been proposed as a potential service delivery method to improve service access. However, to date the uptake of telepractice with this population has been limited due to the lack of evidence to support this model of care, with clinician concerns regarding safety and validity cited as a barrier to uptake.

Evidence

Forty children (aged 4 months – 7 years) had their feeding skills simultaneously assessed by one speech pathologist at their home and a second speech pathologist who lead the appointment via telepractice. A purpose-built assessment proforma was used to assess (1) positioning, (2) overall development, (3) oral motor function, (4) respiratory status, (5) observation of eating and drinking, (6) parent-child interaction, (7) overall feeding skills and (8) feeding recommendations. Agreement between the two conditions was compared, and clinician and parent satisfaction was obtained using questionnaires.

Results from the study identified high levels of inter-rater reliability (>85% percent exact agreement) between the telepractice and in-person models of care for all assessment elements except intra-oral examination. Clinicians and parents were satisfied with the telepractice service, with 92% of clinicians reporting they would re-offer telepractice services to the child in the future and 76% of parents indicating they felt the appointment was equal to a traditional in-person assessment.

Practice Change

This study demonstrated that paediatric feeding assessments conducted via telepractice were valid and reliable. Study outcomes have resulted in increased telepractice service provision at the Queensland Children's Hospital, and have supported local, national and international clinicians to develop telepractice services.

Publication/s

Raatz, Ward, Marshall & Burns (Under review). Evaluating the use of telepractice to deliver pediatric feeding assessments. Under review with Dysphagia.

Adapted from Tilley Pain (Townsville HHS)

Based on the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association's Health Policy Evidence Brief

Metro South Health Research Strategy 2019 – 2024 https://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/2325000/research-strategy.pdf

Allied Health Research Capability & Development Strategy 2017 – 2020 <https://metrosouth.health.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/allied-health-research-strategy.pdf>

National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/sites/default/files/migrated/Overview-of-the-NSQHS-Standards-second-edition.pdf>