Caregiver Strategies to Support Mealtime Participation in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders
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Introduction

- Children with ASD five times more likely than TD peers to have feeding challenge
- Eating as a family associated with physical and social-emotional well being of family members
- Feeding challenges disrupt family mealtime routines and reduce opportunity for family engagement at mealtimes
- Families use variety of strategies to increase children’s participation in mealtime
- Need to identify, describe, and understand these strategies in order to develop effective interventions for feeding challenges

Purpose: To identify and describe strategies parents implement to support their child with ASD’s participation in mealtime

Methods

Participants:
15 children with ASD (2-7 years) and with parent-reported feeding challenges

Observations:
1-2 mealtimes typical for the specific family were observed and videotaped

Analysis:
- Qualitative content analysis
- Observed parent strategies within each video
- Research team discussion to organize themes into defined categories
- Mealtimes videos were coded at least twice by independent raters for prevalence and frequency of strategies
- Interrater reliability was calculated: Cohens Kappa min (0.42) with a mean of (0.60)

Discussion and Implications

- Results show a minimum of two categories coded for each video with no consistent pattern in overlap of categories within family mealtimes
- The inconsistent and unpredictable overlap of categories highlights the individualistic nature of feeding challenges and the need for family specific intervention strategies
- These results can be used to establish a foundational description and understanding of a variety of parental mealtime strategies, allowing for further investigation into the efficacy of strategies in use as well as the development of effective family-mediated mealtime interventions for children with ASD and feeding challenges.
- The overlap of themes across all videos could indicate that a multifaceted intervention involving multiple strategies catered to each family would be the most beneficial to address feeding challenges in children with ASD on a family level.
- OT’s are uniquely positioned to provide these interventions due to a holistic perspective on feeding and family mealtime.

References