**CAREGIVER OUTCOMES IN GROUP INTERVENTION FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER**

**Odette Weiss & Adrienne Perry**

**York University**

**Objectives:** Caregivers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are faced with unique experiences that can be positive and/or negative. In Ontario, most children with ASD receive some form of intervention encompassing a wide range of skill domains and containing varying levels of caregiver involvement. Some evidence suggests that caregiver involvement in intervention can have benefits for both child and caregiver outcomes. The purpose of this study is to investigate caregiver wellbeing and quality of life and whether these factors change as a child with ASD completes a behavioural group intervention. The research questions are: 1) Do caregivers report a change in wellbeing and/or quality of life after their child with ASD has completed the group? 2) Are changes maintained at a 2-month follow-up? 3) Do groups with a more intensive caregiver training component demonstrate better outcomes?

**Method:** Caregivers of children with ASD who were enrolled in a behavioural group intervention were recruited from Surrey Place. Questionnaires were completed by 169 caregivers (125 females, 39 males, 5 unknown) over three time points. One questionnaire was completed at the beginning of the group intervention, another was completed near the end of the group intervention, and a final questionnaire was completed at a two-month follow-up. The data collected through the questionnaires included: basic child information (date of birth, gender, brief adaptive skills), caregiver personal resources (positive gain, coping, self-efficacy), family system resources (marital satisfaction, impact of having a child with ASD, family hardiness, family quality of life), informal social support, formal supports and services (services accessed, satisfaction with services, fit of services with families’ needs), stressful live events, positive and negative caregiver outcomes (parenting stress, mental health, and personal wellbeing), and caregiver demographics. Data regarding the specific group intervention (skill domain, caregiver involvement level) were also collected.

**Results:** Data for this study have been collected and analyses are currently underway. Case-by-case change plots will be created for each participant to determine whether change patterns over time are visually apparent and inform the ensuing analyses. Multilevel modeling will be utilized, with variables entered into the model in an order based on conceptual and statistical considerations. Child and select environmental factors (e.g., socioeconomic status) will be used as control variables. The outcome variables will include both positive and negative factors.

**Discussion/Conclusion:** The results of this study will contribute to our knowledge of wellbeing and quality of life of caregivers of children with ASD, and specifically in the context of children’s intervention. It is important to understand the impact of these interventions on caregivers and to assess whether additional resources might be required, as caregivers play a vital role in children’s lives.

**Correspondence:**

**Odette Weiss, M.A.**

**York University**

**4700 Keele Street**

**Toronto, ON M3J 1P3**

**odettew@yorku.ca**