

Online program helps families of pre-schoolers with ADHD

September 29 2016



Credit: University of Queensland

A University of Queensland online program has been shown to alleviate children's attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms and parents' stress.

UQ Parenting and Family Support Centre Director and study co-author Professor Matt Sanders said a University of Auckland study trialed [Triple P Online](#), a self-directed, interactive [positive parenting program](#) currently available free to Queensland families.

Professor Sanders said the study lent support to international clinical guidelines advocating that families of pre-school children with signs of ADHD should access evidence-based parenting programs before medication is prescribed.

"This is the first study in the world to demonstrate that an online program can generate improvements for these families," Professor Sanders said.

The study, conducted by University of Auckland Faculty of Education and Social Work researchers Dr Nike Franke and Dr Louise Keown, involved 53 New Zealand families with children aged three or four with extreme levels of hyperactivity and inattentiveness.

Parents had access to the Triple P Online program for 16 weeks, plus two phone consultations to help tailor strategies to their family situation.

After taking part in the trial, parents reported significantly lower levels of stress and depression and greater parenting satisfaction.

Many parents reported feeling more confident in their parenting skills, and that their child's behaviour was much easier to manage.

"Coping at home with pre-schoolers who show these extreme behaviours can be very challenging and stressful for parents," Dr Franke said.

"They can also have difficulties in social situations with their peers, and parents can feel embarrassed, ashamed, and blame themselves."

Dr Keown said the results of the trial highlighted the potential benefits of an online parenting program as an early intervention for preschool ADHD, and for parents of these children.

"ADHD behaviours are associated with long-term problems such as difficult relationships with parents, teachers and peers, and poor academic performance, so it is best to intervene as early as possible," Dr Keown said.

"An effective online program means parents can get help in their own homes easily and anonymously which is what many parents want."

Triple P Online is part of the Triple P - Positive Parenting Program system of programs developed by Professor Sanders and fellow UQ researchers.

Triple P programs, including Triple P Online, [are available free](#) to Queensland families, funded by the Queensland Government.

The study was published in the *Journal of Attention Disorders*.

More information: N. Franke et al. An RCT of an Online Parenting Program for Parents of Preschool-Aged Children With ADHD Symptoms, *Journal of Attention Disorders* (2016). [DOI: 10.1177/1087054716667598](#)

Provided by University of Queensland

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