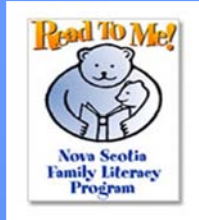


Read to Me! Uptake Study – Wave 1

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INTRODUCTION

- Reading to and other language based activities (e.g. singing, reciting rhymes) with very young children is important for development and for later reading success.
- Evaluations of early literacy interventions in the USA have reported an increase in frequency of parents reading aloud to children¹.
- Reading aloud to children is influenced by: parental literacy level, income, education of parent, age of parent, number of children and adults in the home and being a minority^{2,3,4}.
- Parental engagement in language based activities with infants has not been sufficiently studied.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

- *Read to Me!* delivers a literacy bag containing books and materials to parents in Nova Scotia hospitals, within 48 hours of the birth of a child, to encourage parental engagement in language and literacy based activities.

OBJECTIVE

- Evaluate the frequency and duration of parental engagement in active (singing, reading, talking) and passive (listening to CDs, radio, watching TV) preliteracy activities with newborns and to determine the role of social determinants of health on engagement in literacy activities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What components of the program would be most successful in terms of usage (i.e., uptake)?
- What preliteracy activities are most common?
- Does the program change attitudes about reading to infants?
- Do high education levels predict increased engagement in preliteracy activities, particularly reading?
- How are education and program impact associated with reading?

METHODS

Participants

- 1072 parents of babies born at the IWK Health Centre in Halifax, NS.
- Mean age of participants was 31 and 34 for the primary and secondary parents respectively.
- 18.9% of participants had high school education or less.

Procedure

- Participants completed a phone questionnaire within 1-10 months of the birth of their baby.
- Questionnaire asked about frequency and duration of engagement in language based activities (e.g. singing, listening to CDs, reading, etc.), participant literacy levels and demographic questions.

Variables:

- Daily average reading by all caregivers to infant.
- Age is recorded in weeks.

Figure 1. Usage of components of the *Read to Me!* bag.

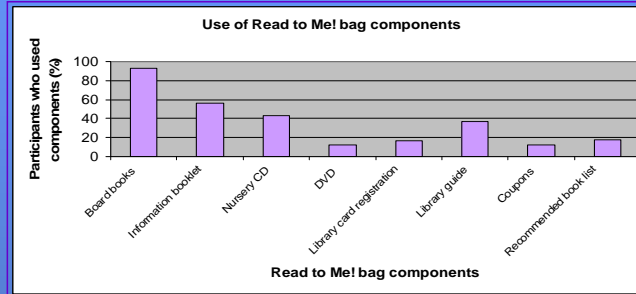


Table 1. Parental engagement in passive and active preliteracy activities with newborns.

Literacy activity	Mean amount of time/day (minutes)	N of participants	% participants
PASSIVE			
Listening to CDs	42.8	645/1072	60.2
Watching TV	37.6	636/1072	59.3
Listening to radio	98.4	672/1072	62.7
ACTIVE			
Singing	57.8	1040/1072	97.0
Reading	21.8	955/1072	89.0
Talking	258.7	1046/1072	97.6

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSES

- 40.2% of participants reported reading as one of their three favorite activities to do with their baby
- 14.7% of participants reported having at least some difficulty with reading
- 8.8% of participants reported having fewer than 10 adult books in the home
- 9.0% of participants reported not reading to their baby at all
- 67.6% of participants started reading to their baby when they were less than 1 month old.
- Older babies were read to more; $r = .08, p < .05$.

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAM

- 119 (11.4%) participants indicated a positive change in their attitude towards reading to their infant.
- Education level and impact of program impacted program, although n.s.

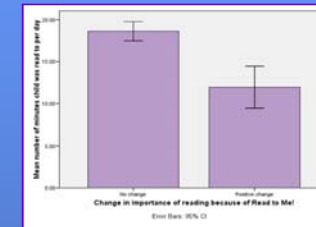
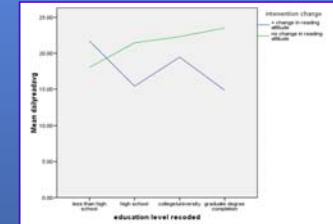


Figure 2. Change in importance of reading after receiving *Read to Me!* bag versus mean number of minutes baby was read to each day. $T = -1.27, p = .17$

Figure 3. Education level of primary parent and influence of intervention on mean number of minutes baby was read to each day. Interaction $F = 0.25, p = .82$.



CONCLUSIONS

- 91% of participants reported reading to their newborn.
- *Read to Me!* bag components: board books were used by the majority of parents whereas the DVD, library card invitation, coupons and recommended book list were underused.
- On average, participants who reported an increase in the importance of reading to their newborn after receiving the *Read to Me!* bag, read to their newborn less than those who reported no change. This underscores the need for longitudinal evaluation of the *Read to Me!* program.

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