

POSITIVE IMPACT OF AN INPATIENT EARLY CHILDHOOD LITERACY PROGRAM: PARENT PERSPECTIVES

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Background: Anticipatory guidance about reading and distribution of books during primary care clinic visits is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). To incorporate this into the inpatient neurodevelopmental care of children with congenital heart disease, we launched a novel program “Books@Heart” at the Texas Children’s Hospital Heart Center. Here we present the parental response to this program.

Materials/Methods: We launched “Books@Heart” in February 2021 for all infants with congenital or acquired heart disease, cardiomyopathy, or arrhythmia who are admitted to our Heart Center. Each family receives a book, reading tracking calendar, and guidance about reading at ages corresponding to recommended well-child checks. At least 2 weeks after receiving the first book, anonymous feedback was solicited from parents through a survey to provide feedback on satisfaction with the program, perceived barriers to reading, reading habits pre- and post-Books@Heart, and any additional feedback.

Results: Thirty-three feedback forms were completed (total families during the period = 186), with 20 fully completed. Ninety-four percent (31/33) of respondents reported being satisfied with the information and books received through the program. All respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the program helped them feel more connected and involved in their child’s care. A majority of patients did not identify any barriers to reading to their child in the hospital (15/22, 68%), however 3/22 reported that they did not know they were allowed to read to their child and 2/22 reported feeling that “there is never enough time”. All respondents felt Books@Heart improved their hospital experience. There was a significant improvement in the self-reported frequency of reading after being introduced to Books@Heart ($p = 0.042$) with the proportion reading to their child daily increasing from 25% (5/20) to 55% (11/20).

Conclusions: Based on early feedback, we conclude that an inpatient early childhood literacy program in a heart center is favorably received by families, with positive impacts on family engagement and experience. We found a significant increase in self-reported reading frequency after the launch of the program suggesting potential for developmental benefit. We were limited by a low response rate. Larger studies with prospective surveys are needed to assess impact of inpatient developmental care initiatives on long-term attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes.

Images / Graph / Table

QUESTION	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	RESPONSES				
Are you satisfied with the type of books and information you received through Books@Heart? ¹	n = 33	94% (31/33) Very Satisfied	3% (1/33) Somewhat satisfied	3% (1/33) Unsure		
Have there been any barriers to reading to your child in the hospital? ²	n = 22	68% (15/22) No Barriers	14% (3/22) Didn't know I was allowed to read	9% (2/22) There is never enough time	5% (1/22) I'm worried I'm in the way of medical care	5% (1/22) I don't have books to read to them
Do you agree with the following statements? ³		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Reading to my child helps me feel more connected and involved in their care	n = 19	89% (17/19)	11% (2/19)	0	0	0
Books@Heart has improved the patient experience at Texas Children's Hospital	n = 17	53% (9/17)	47% (8/17)	0	0	0
On average, how many times did you read to your child? ²		Never	A few times a month	1-2 times per week	3-5 times a week	Daily
Before Books@Heart	n = 23	14% (3/23)	5% (1/23)	27% (6/23)	27% (6/23)	27% (6/23)
After Books@Heart	n = 20	0% (0/20)	10% (2/20)	20% (4/20)	35% (7/20)	55% (11/20)
How many books did you have for your child at home/in the hospital? ³		None	1-5 books	5-10 books	Too many to count	
Before Books@Heart	n = 22	14% (3/22)	32% (7/22)	27% (6/22)	27% (6/22)	
After Books@Heart	n = 20	10% (2/20)	30% (6/20)	30% (6/20)	30% (6/20)	

¹ Questions included in first edition of feedback questionnaire

² Questions added in second edition of feedback questionnaire

³ Questions added in third edition of feedback questionnaire