

Presenting Author Name

Abby Edmond

Presenting Author Category

Undergraduate Student

Research Category

Clinical

Abstract Title

Understanding the link between Autism and Immigration, perspectives from parents and allied health professionals

Background

In Manitoba, children of immigrant families are overrepresented among those with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), yet the reasons behind this are unknown.

Objective

The aim of this study was to conduct focus groups with immigrant parents of children with ASD and with allied health professionals (AHPs) who work with these families, to determine which aspects of immigration warrant investigation in a future, larger family-oriented qualitative study.

Methods

Two separate focus groups were conducted, one with five parents and one with ten AHPs. Participant discussion was guided using semi-structured open-ended questions. Following a thematic analysis approach, focus group transcripts were coded inductively by two independent coders. Perspectives from both focus groups were combined to create overarching themes.

Results

From the two focus groups conducted, we identified four overarching themes that should guide future studies. 1-Home Environment: The home environment of immigrant families is impacted by challenges including demanding work schedules, shifting family structure, and limited sleep. This can lead to focused caregiving, limited play, child isolation, children feeding independently, and increased screentime. 2-Compounding Stressors and Isolation: Immigrant families experience stressors and are often isolated once in Canada. 3-Cultural Values and Acculturation: Existing cultural values and acculturation in Canada shape caregiving; immigrant parents may feel pressure to teach their children English, and children often have less outdoor play. 4-Barriers to Accessing Programming and Information: Immigrant families often lack information on programming, programming availability is limited, or they cannot physically access programming, often due to lack of transportation.

Conclusion

This study has provided four areas identified by parents and AHPs as important to investigate in studying the link between ASD and immigration. These findings will be foundational in developing questions and approaches to use with immigrant families in our future study aimed at better understanding the role of immigration and its association with ASD.

Authors

Name	Role	Profession
Abby Edmond	Presenting Author	Medical Student
Elizabeth Hammond	Co Author	Physiotherapist, Assistant Professor
Debbie Williams	Co Author	Nurse
M. Florencia Ricci	Senior Author	Developmental Pediatrician, Associate Professor