

Family-directed Positive Behaviour Support following Acquired Brain Injury

Research Team: Michelle Bellon¹, Alinka Fisher¹, Sharon Lawn², McKay Sohlberg³, Jacinta Douglas⁴ & Huahua Yin¹

¹ College of Nursing & Health Sciences, Flinders University, SA

² College of Medicine & Public Health, Flinders University, SA

³ Communication Disorders & Sciences, University of Oregon, USA

⁴ Living with Disability Centre, School of Allied Health, La Trobe University, Vic.

People often experience behavioural changes following an acquired brain injury (ABI), including behaviours of such intensity, frequency or duration that threaten the quality of life and/or safety of the individual or others. These are referred to as behaviours of concern (BOC).

The Family-directed Approach to Brain injury - Positive Behaviour Support (FAB-PBS) program was developed to educate and support families to design and implement behavioural support interventions for their family members with ABI. This consists of a four-week education phase followed by four individualised sessions and group follow-up, which together aim to empower families to promote prosocial behaviours and address BOC. This study aimed to determine if the FAB-PBS program is an acceptable and feasible intervention for increasing capability of families in providing effective behaviour support following ABI in community settings.

Pre, post and follow-up data were collected to examine changes in: frequency and severity of BOC; caregiver self-efficacy and confidence in identifying, implementing and monitoring behavioral strategies; caregiver burden and service utilisation for behavioural support; and feedback on the FAB-PBS program.

Five participants met inclusion criteria and were admitted to the study, with assessments completed at multiple time points (4 baseline; 6 outcome assessments). Three participants withdrew due to significant personal issues, with two completing the full study. In order to further examine the effectiveness of the 4-week educational component, this phase was delivered to an additional three participants, evaluated through pre and post questionnaires and interviews.

Results indicate positive preliminary trends, including a sustained reduction in severity, frequency and impact of behaviours of concern as measured by the OBS and frequency measures. Improvements across un-targeted behaviours of concern were also identified over time. Confidence in providing identifying, implementing and monitoring behavioural strategies was reported, together with feeling less "out of control". The Caregiver Appraisal Scale identified sustained improvements in Caregiver Mastery overtime for both participants.

Participants reported high levels of satisfaction with the program, indicating a greater understanding of why behaviours change following ABI, and identifying appropriate behaviour support strategies. Participants did not report receiving other behavioural supports in the six-month period prior or following, commenting they did not need other additional resources/support as this program was sufficient.

Preliminary findings suggest the FAB-PBS program may be an effective approach to enhance the capability of family members to provide behaviour support following ABI in community settings. The FAB-PBS shows promise in its ability to educate and guide families in identifying factors influencing behavioural changes after ABI and implementing effective strategies. However, the burden associated with conducting longitudinal research raises important considerations regarding family-professional relationships, flexible modes of delivery, and meaningful, but limited assessments. Findings provide important insights and recommendations for future behaviour support research and practice seeking to focus on family involvement.

The FAB-PBS Workbook and Facilitator Guides are available to download:

- <https://www.flinders.edu.au/content/dam/documents/research/research-studies/pbs-education-workbook.pdf>
- <https://www.flinders.edu.au/content/dam/documents/research/research-studies/pbs-facilitator-guide.pdf>