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Recommended Citation

Tunggal, Eunice AK. (2022). Qualitative Evaluation of a Canadian Community Oral Immunotherapy Program. *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, 149 (2). https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/nursingpub/144

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A Qualitative Evaluation of the Patient and Family Experiences Within a Canadian Community Oral Immunotherapy Program

INTRODUCTION

Various studies show effective allergendesensitization of children by exposure to the allergens using oral immunotherapy (OIT). In early 2019, Soller et al. assessed safety concerns of OIT in preschool-aged children in a community-based OIT program. Their results showed that OIT is safe for children, with low risk of severe reaction or use of epinephrine (Soller et al., 2019).

The Windsor Allergy Asthma Clinic in Windsor, ON, Canada established and has persisted with an OIT program for patients since May 2017. The community-based program offers flexibility in dosage timings and amounts and for a personalized level of care.

OBJECTIVES

- Describe the OIT experiences of patients and families
- Determine changes in lifestyle during and after hitting maintenance of OIT
- Collect recommendations for improving community OIT programs, and for families doing OIT

METHODS

Virtual interviews of OIT patients were digitally recorded and transcribed. We apply Braun & Clark's (2006) thematic analysis to:

- 1. Become familiar with our data
- 2. Generate initial codes
- 3. Search for themes
- 4. Review themes
- 5. Define and name themes
- 6. Produce our report

RESULTS

Preliminary Codes: The parental perspective of a child's OIT journey

Life before OIT

Reactions
Social
Physical
Emotional

"... on his 1st birthday he touched peanut butter and ended up with a head that looked like the Elephant Man from the movie [...] what's going to happen now when he goes to University or something?" (P2_1A)

Decision to start OIT

Research
Outside Influence
Decision-Making
Information Needed
Initial Concerns

"And the idea of starting off with such a miniscule amount working its way up, seemed logical to us. So uh, yeah, you know, we wanted him to be able to, when he's going to school not be so afraid [...] So, yeah, protection. Peace of mind." (P25_14A)

OIT Experience

Initiation
Titration
Reactions
Challenges
Adaptations

"I mean, maybe we're lucky- but it was smooth sailing, every dose, never an issue." (P25_14A)

"On some of the increases like around 500 micrograms he got really sick, like, he was in pain crying with cramps and sweats." (P2_1A)

Maintenance

Dosage Format Reactions Challenges

"And, it was very, it was scary at the hospital, eating the peanuts for the first time, um, and then realizing that it was okay." (P23_10A)

Life after OIT

Social Physical Emotional

"A sense of normalization, right? Like you feel more normalized amongst your peers. Knowing that you have, you know, a little bit of superpower now— a little bit of immunity."

(P18_11A)



Participants

Parent/Child Dyads	Mean age (SD)		
	OIT Start	Maintenance	Interview
16	8.6±4.7	9.5±4.7	12.1±4.6

CONCLUSIONS

Peanut allergy in a family may produce fear, anxiety and restrictive lifestyles, which can reduce life quality. Decisions to begin OIT varied, but with an overarching hope of increasing child protection. Parents of children receiving OIT describe positive and negative experiences during the treatment program, and adaptations to the program to suit individual lifestyles.

Themes of reactions, and social, physical and emotional impacts crossed all stages of the OIT journey, but the dialogue changed over the course of the procedure.

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Funded by the Windsor Allergy
Asthma Education Centre