





Perspectives of high needs families on visiting the museum: A pilot study exploring social prescribing

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Family

perceptions of

museum visits

Introduction

- Social prescribing (SP) is an innovative movement in which health professionals prescribe social activities to combat isolation and promote psychosocial wellbeing¹
- Although SP programs have been successful in improving wellbeing of older adults at risk of social isolation^{1,2,3}, research evaluating SP programs for children & families is limited
- •Mental health concerns and social isolation are also more prevalent in families of low income status⁴
- The Vanier Social Pediatric Hub (VSPH) serves high needs and diverse families facing significant socioeconomic barriers to accessing community activities

Objectives

We designed a pilot study to "prescribe" free museum passes to families attending the VSPH and to explore their thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to this museum visit.

Methods

- The VSPH partnered with the federally-funded Museum of Nature to "prescribe" free day-passes to children and parents of six families (N = 23, aged 3-38-years old)
- Demographics were collected from chart review
- Pre-visit survey: Immediately on arrival, participants completed age-appropriate surveys of open-ended questions regarding their current feelings and their anticipated feelings and expectations for the visit
- Post-visit survey: Participants responded to open-ended questions regarding their museum experience. Photovoice was used to capture children's perspectives.
- Follow-up telephone interview: 2-6 months post-visit to elicit caregivers' thoughts and feelings about the visit
- Data analysis: Thematic analysis was performed with NVivo software

Results – Participant demographics **Total Families** N = 6, (%) Variable Total Sample Ethnicity N = 23, (%)3 (50) Nigerian Caregiver Identity, n (%) Syrian 2 (33.3) Fathers 2 (25) Canadian 1 (16.7) Mothers Immigration status Number of children in family 3 (50) Refugee claimants 2-children Permanent residents 1 (16.7) 3-children 2 (33.3) 1 (16.7) Immigrants, status unknown 1 (16.7) 4-children 1 (16.7) Canadian citizens *one child did not participate Age, M (SD) 2 (33.3) Families involved in out-of-school 34 (3.42) Caregivers activities 6.44 (2.94) Children

Results – Thematic Analysis

1. "happy",

"excited",

"good" and/or

Positive sentiments

- 1. Anticipatory feelings
- 2. Feelings about the visit
- 3. New experiences
 - 2. "I and my kids had great experience. We got the opportunity to see most animal space, birds and many
 - 3. "That was my first ever in my life going to museum! Like when I saw bones, saw life."

Learning at the museum

- 1. Learning about nature 2. Nature is fun
- 3. Interactive activities
 - "I learned about the magmatic rock it's made when magma is cooled. Metamorphic rock it's made when a preexisting rock is transformed by the heat of the earth into a new rock."
 - 2. "It is a good thing to have family going for such visits. After all, nature is fun."



It's dinosaur poop."

touched, my hands

3. " saw ice, [...]

"That's me and daddy. We were playing something. [...] That's [brother's name]."

> . "Oh my god, it made them so happy. To today, they still talk about it. It gave them a new chance to learn new things."

Fostering connections

- 1. Spending time with family
- 2. Sharing with others
- 3. Cultural, environmental & community connections
 - . "it was special to go as a family all together. That way the family could spend time together, especially the daughters. During that visit, it was the first time with all the
 - 3. "The first thing in my experience is that it allowed me to learn more about the history of Canada. They pulled the dates of when and how it happened. It's really nice history."

2. "Yes to learn

Future directions

. Challenges and barriers

"I sent all the

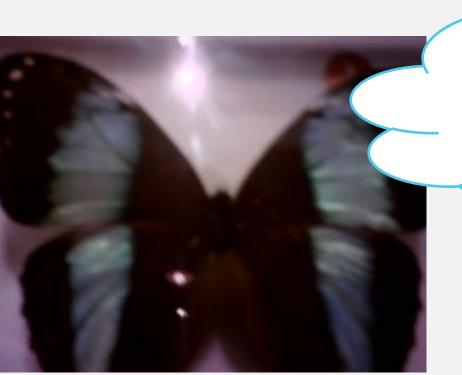
pictures to my

mom and sister

amazing.

in Syria. It was

- 2. Interest in returning & long-term passes
- 3. Other activities



museum for a sleep over or

even for the butterfly exhibit.

1. ""My favourite

pictures are the

one of my children

and the butterfly

'Imaging what nylon bags and plastic

can do to our environment and sea if

they are not properly disposed."

. "Financial would be the only reason not to go. It is something that I can't afford right now because I have to support by

3. ""It was very fun, finding

rocks, got this fossil and

got to trade rocks."

some other things we couldn't finish learning about." . "it's hard as a lower income person to be able to go to the museum. I couldn't believe how much it cost to go to the

Discussion

Identification of challenges and perceived benefits

- The main factors preventing this population's ability to take part in this educational and social outing involved financial challenges, which were negated by the free pass
- Participants of all ages reported multiple perceived benefits including positive emotions evoked by visiting and learning at the museum, which mirrors the two emotions of 'absorbed' and 'enlightened' reported by older adults taking part in a SP program with museum visits²

Emphasis on learning about the natural world, interactive activities and building family relationships

- Museums for decades have been known to promote family learning and facilitate child-parental play^{5, 6}, which was recognized and embraced by our families
- Spending time with family and strong parental-child relationships are key to children's psychosocial wellbeing⁷
- The museum facilitates engagement with nature, a practice that has declined significantly due to rapid urbanization⁸

Interest in long-term passes to the museum

• Families universally wished to return, with the shared sentiment that a one-day pass was insufficient to explore the entirety of the museum

Conclusions

- A visit to the museum is viewed by high needs families as offering unique and positive experiences that facilitate stronger connections within families, communities, and to the natural world, and promote excitement around learning
- The findings of this study highlight the potential for SP programs to improve psychosocial wellbeing in children and have implications for securing long-term, open and free access to all 7 federally-funded museums in Ottawa for low income and high needs families

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