

# Department of Research Abstracts

## **READING PROMOTION AT WELL CHILD VISITS: IT'S THE SCREEN TIME THAT COUNTS**

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**BACKGROUND:** Effective literacy promotion programs combine practitioner reading promotion with book giveaways and volunteer readers. It is unknown whether less involved approaches, such as practitioner reading promotion alone at well child care (WCC) visits, might achieve similar results.

**OBJECTIVE:** To determine the effectiveness of a simple practitioner reading promotion intervention in a national cluster randomized controlled trial.

**DESIGN/METHODS:** In a randomized controlled trial at WCC visits for children ages 2-7, Pediatric Research in Office Settings (PROS) practices were randomized either to a reading promotion (RP) arm with a brief educational message about the benefits of reading aloud or a violence prevention (VP) arm that included counseling on reduced screen time and “tangible tools” (timers to reduce screen time). Parents reported how many days per week they read to their children in a pre-visit questionnaire and again at 1 and 6 months via telephone interview. Generalized Estimating Equations were applied to examine parent behavior change in the two arms over time.

**RESULTS:** The 125 practices (202 providers) from 49 states, Canada, and Puerto Rico enrolled 3509 families. At baseline, 54% of parents read to their children at least 5 days/week, and 20% read 2 days/week or fewer. Reading rates 5 days/week in the RP arm were 53% (baseline), 66% (1 month), and 64% (6 months); and 55%, 71%, and 72% in the VP arm. Analysis of 6 month follow up data indicated that reading at least 5 days/week was associated with younger child's age ( $p<.0001$ ), higher parental education ( $p<.0001$ ), white race ( $p<.0001$ ), non-Hispanic ethnicity ( $p<.0001$ ), having been read to frequently as a child ( $p<.0001$ ), having more children's books in the home ( $p<.0001$ ), and being in the VP arm over the period of follow up ( $p<0.02$ ). The proportion of parents limiting screen time to <120 minutes/day increased from 39% at baseline to 45% at 6 months in the VP group and from 39% to 41% in the RP group ( $p=0.02$ ).

**CONCLUSIONS:** Although the proportion of parents reading to young children increased in both groups, the reduced screen time message and timer approach in the VP group achieved better reading promotion outcomes than the explicit but brief reading promotion message in the RP group. Efforts directed at reducing screen time for children may be an effective way to promote parents' reading aloud to children.

