

**Developmental Pediatrics**

**Title:** A GROUP VISIT MODEL PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN WITH SPINA BIFIDA

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**Background:** Group visits can be conceptualized as an extended doctor's office visit where medical as well as educational, social and psychological concerns can be dealt with effectively. Group visits have improved outcomes for adults with chronic conditions such as diabetes. Our center adapted this model for an obesity prevention initiative for children with spina bifida.

**Method:** Participants were families of children ages 6-18 years. Six monthly visits were conducted at a gymnasium. Staff included our medical team as well as physical education faculty and students from a local college. Format included: (a) sign-in and nursing assessment (b) informal gathering/refreshments, (c) guided physical activity in the gym (d) a separate informational session for parents, (e) 1:1 meetings to address medical concerns, (f) debriefing session to answer questions from college students. These sessions also focused on program evaluation vis a vis four major goals for the initiative: 1) establish feasibility of model for delivery of medical care, 2) promote mentoring among youths 3) evaluate educational experience for college students, 4) advocate to improve access to physical activity for children with spina bifida.

**Results:** 1) It was feasible for families to receive medical care at all visits. In addition to weight management, skin care, bowel management, and behavioral concerns were addressed; 2) Children separated easily from parents for mentoring by college students; 3) Students reported high satisfaction with learning; 4) Community involvement was achieved. This included participation by school personnel, revitalization of a wheelchair sports team, and an initiative to promote certification for area adapted physical education teachers.

**Conclusion:** Patient, family, and student satisfaction with group visits is high. Additional studies are needed to compare medical, social, and psychological outcomes of group visits versus conventional care. We also are exploring insurance payment for group visits to sustain this model of care.