Using a Think Aloud Methodology to Understand Physical Activity Internet Search Experiences and Preferences of Parents of Children/Youth with Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

Background and aim: This research examined the physical activity (PA) internet search experiences and preferences of parents of children/youth with disability (CYWD). Parental support is an important correlate of CYWD PA. However, a barrier for many parents in providing support to CYWD is a lack of accessible PA information. The internet is a preferred source of PA information but there is limited research regarding parents’ internet search experiences and preferences to seek PA information for CYWD.

Method: A sample of parents of CYWD (n=10) participated in a prompted think aloud process (i.e., verbalize thoughts) while searching for PA information online. Researchers observed the parents and gathered information regarding their experience and preferences.

Results: Using an inductive thematic analysis of the parents’ think aloud responses, the following emerged as key themes regarding online PA information needs: “Know exactly what programs they offer”, “Keep it very very simple”, and “More work for parents to find something”. PA websites that provided sufficient and relevant information, such as types of supports available for CYWD were considered important and parents used as an online evaluation criterion with regards to the suitability of the program for their CYWD.

Discussion: An improved understanding of parents’ experiences and preferences while searching for PA information can inform how PA or disability organizations structure their websites to create positive search experiences.

Conclusion and Implications: Online information is only valuable when it is accessible and addresses the preferences of parents of CYWD and this research is a first step in the development of strategies to support parents to facilitate PA among CYWD.