Commentary on “How Did the Lockdown Imposed Due to COVID-19 Affect Patients With Cerebral Palsy?”

“How should I apply this information?”

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) placed an additional strain on people's ability to access routine and necessary health care around the world. The lockdowns imposed by many governments added stressors to all families, but especially those that included a special needs child, as caregivers were forced to learn new routines and establish expectations of care during a pandemic. The applicability of telehealth services became paramount, but the capacity for families to access these was selective (ie, insurance limitations, access to appropriate technology, and/or sufficient internet infrastructure).

Literature for children with cerebral palsy places emphasis on certain interventions during episodes of care to improve gross motor skills, independent mobility, and pain. These include strength and mobility training, yoga, fitness training, physical activity, and taping. With implementation of appropriate coaching techniques from the child's therapist(s), many of these interventions could be modified and performed safely in their home to prevent worsening of impairments.

“What should I be mindful about when applying this information?”

Although this article shed light on the impacts of COVID-19 on children with cerebral palsy, it was only for the country of Turkey with unknown effects reported by other countries. It was also unclear which medical team member provided a home exercise program or whether it was regularly monitored by a therapist. This article highlighted a previous recommendation that telemedicine only be used in the short-term. Caregivers tend to agree that telemedicine may not always be as effective as in-person services; however, therapists need to prioritize virtual education and empowerment of patient family members when in-person services are unavailable. Working together, therapists and caregivers can modify interventions to prevent worsening impairments and provide adaptations to improve mobility, positioning, and pain.

Marissa Benigno Slate, PT, DPT, PCS

Milestones & Movement Pediatric Physical Therapy, LLC, Summerville, South Carolina

Joanna Weir Tucker, MEd

Moncks Corner, South Carolina

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

DOI: 10.1097/PER.0000000000000832