

Factors Affecting the Decision of Parent/Carers to Select Blended Diets for their Gastrostomy Fed Child

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Abstract

Purpose: This qualitative study investigated the reasons why parent/carers act against clinical advice and use blended diets for their gastrostomy fed children. The study took an inductive phenomenology approach, attempting to understand the parent's lived experience of blended diets.

Method: Eighteen in-depth interviews were conducted with parents of children and young people who use blended diets in order to understand their lived experiences, constructs, beliefs and concerns in relation to blended diets. An interview guide was used with a main, open question and follow up probes; this gave parents the opportunity to tell their story whilst reducing interviewer influence/bias. The interviews were recorded and transcribed orthographically. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.

Results: Overarching themes were identified that related to medicalization of feeding, wellbeing, nutrition, conflict, questioning and self-efficacy.

Conclusion: The study revealed a mismatch between the priorities of families and those of clinicians, which was also identified in the literature. A change in the locus of control was noted, with parents being reluctant to 'admit' to clinicians that they were using blended diets, combined with the sense that dieticians had less control over the intake of a child who was being fed a blended diet. NHS legislation strives to achieve patient centered care through joint, planning and decision-making; the findings of the study indicate that this aspiration is not being achieved. This qualitative study reveals anecdotal evidence to suggest blended diets have physiological benefits. Further quantitative research is required to further assess this area.

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