

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family's quality of life and parent–child relationships

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Background

- **Importance:** The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family's quality of life and parent–child relationships among families with syndromic autistic children and those with intellectual disabilities is unknown.
- **Design:** This study used data collected at two points in time: prior to COVID-19, specifically during 2018 as previously described (Bolbocean et al., [2021](#)), as well as during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both studies recruited participating families using identical methods and sample frames. Between July 2020 and January 2021, 230 families with children diagnosed with PMD, RTT, and SYNGAP1-ID completed self-report questionnaires in order to ascertain COVID-19 induced lifestyle changes, FQoL and PC relationships.
- **Methods:** Differences in baseline characteristics, FQoL average scores before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, differences in environments and PC interactions across diagnoses were ascertained using the ANOVA test for means, and Kruskal–Wallis test for medians. Fisher's exact test was used to assess differences for categorical variables. Differences between 2018 and during pandemic FQoL average scores were ascertained using the Student t-test for unequal variances and nonparametric tests for medians

Results and Conclusions

- Despite challenges imposed by the COVID-19 outbreak, our study found that the quality of life reported by participating families during the first year of COVID-19 appears to be similar to ratings from a prepandemic study with families with the same conditions, some of whom may have been in the COVID-19 study.
- Overall, parents of children in our sample generally displayed a stable functioning trajectory as measured by FQoL instrument. Quality of life outcomes for families who completed surveys before and after the commencement of school activities during September 2020 did not appear to differ.
- The COVID-19 pandemic was found to be positively associated with PC bonding, relational satisfaction, and increased emotional connection between parents and their children.
- Our findings provide evidence of family resilience which might explain positive PC interactions during COVID-19. Exploring mechanisms which explain how families with autistic and ID children confronted, managed disruptive experiences, and buffered COVID-19 induced stress is a fruitful direction for future research.