

The Early Steps Project: Occupational Therapy in a Pediatric Primary Care Setting

Abstract:

The purpose of this study is expand on the Early STEPs project goal of identifying early developmental delays in infants and young children in a health disparate population and to collect preliminary data to lay the groundwork for a future NIH grant proposal. Individuals with less education have poor health and shorter life expectancies than well-educated individuals, and research reveals that poverty is directly related to limited education. An innovative approach is needed to overcome barriers, improve health literacy, and educate parents on effective parenting strategies for this population. Technology may be the part of the solution to this issue. Through Early STEPs, the occupational therapists will continue to refer families to early intervention and therapy services as appropriate and follow-up to ensure that services are initiated. The OT will also determine if the parents are utilizing the Word Gap App and other provided resources to support their child's development and to manage their stress. By increasing parental awareness and knowledge of language and motor skill development, the environments of underserved children will be enriched and parental stress will be reduced so that these children can have improved health and reach their full potential.