

IPWSO MENTAL HEALTH ECHO



IPWSO Mental Health ECHO Summary September 2023: Early Intervention for children with PWS

IPWSO presented the 6th and final Mental Health in Prader-Willi syndrome ECHO on the 26th of September, 2023. At this ECHO meeting the objective was to explore questions such as can early intervention make a difference enabling some degree of self-control over eating and other behaviours? If so, what works and what should be offered to children with PWS and their families?

Anastasia Dimitropoulos, Professor in the Department of Psychological Sciences and the Director of the Schubert Center for Child Studies at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, presented on *The Importance of Pretend Play in Early Intervention*.

This presentation covered:

1. The importance of pretend play for early intervention.
2. Social cognitive challenges in PWS that can be addressed with play intervention.
3. Strategies to boost pretend play and use play as a platform for learning for children with PWS.

Dr Kate Woodcock, Reader in Applied Clinical Psychology at the Centre for Applied Psychology in the School of Psychology at the University of Birmingham, UK, presented *Can early intervention with children living with PWS strengthen the cognitive capacity to effectively deal with change?*

The presentation included:

1. Cognitive flexibility and specifically task switching in Prader-Willi syndrome. Some of the situations that can be most difficult for people with Prader-Willi syndrome are when task switching is challenged. In these situations, emotional outbursts and problematic behaviours are common.
2. An approach that carefully balances structure in routines with flexibility for children may be a helpful early intervention strategy.
3. Development of a web-based tool to help strike this balance. A key element is that the tool uses gamification to allow children to feel in control of their routines, despite parents being able to programme flexibility into these.

Karin Clarke is a parent to a daughter with PWS, Chairperson of the PWS Support Group South Africa and a trustee of IPWSO, presented a challenge to stimulate group discussion, on the obstacles to early intervention that families of a child with PWS may face.

Reflections on the meeting can be heard in the video summary linked below.

Video links

Anastasia Dimitropoulos: [The Importance of Pretend Play in Early Intervention](#).

Kate Woodcock: [Can early intervention with children living with PWS strengthen the cognitive capacity to effectively deal with change?](#)

Patrice Carroll: [IPWSO Mental Health ECHO Summary September 26, 2023](#).

Thank you very much to everyone who attended the ECHO sessions and participated.