Why did we do this study?
We did this study because we wanted to see how the childhood gastrostomy tube surgery (G-tube surgery) affected a caregiver’s life. Even though surgical research is usually about the patient, our research zoomed in on caregiver stress after the G-tube operation.

Who was involved?
This study included 31 caregivers who:
- Had a child referred for G-tube surgery at McMaster Children’s Hospital
- Played a role in feeding their child more than 50% of the time both before and after surgery

What did we do?
We followed all caregivers for up to a year after G-tube insertion and collected quality of life data at different times in the study:
- 1 month before G-tube surgery
- 2 weeks before G-tube surgery
- 2 weeks after G-tube surgery
- 3, 6, 9, and 12 months after G-tube surgery

What did we find?
We found that an outstanding 90% of caregivers reported an improvement in mental health a year after the G-tube surgery. **Stress levels also improved, reaching near-normal levels a year after the G-tube surgery!** Thing like physical pain showed no change after the surgery.

What does this mean?
G-tube surgery can improve feelings of long-term worry, guilt, and stress in caregivers. These findings can be used to better prepare families who are considering G-tube surgery. Health care providers can:
- Give caregivers clear information about what to expect
- Reassure caregivers that quality of life improves and returns to normal after one year

Did anything stand out?
Yes! The study revealed that caregivers worry a lot in the time right before and after the G-tube insertion. We can use these results to improve resources for families at sensitive points in treatment (right before and after G-tube surgery).
Frequently Asked Questions

As a caregiver, what can I expect immediately before and after surgery?

- Two weeks before G-tube surgery, caregivers had increased feelings of guilt and worry compared to the rest of the follow-up period.
- Caregivers feel concerned about their child’s present and future health right before G-tube surgery.
- Two weeks after the surgery, many parents reported increased feelings of long-term concern for their child’s future.

How will this surgery affect my long-term health and stress as a caregiver?

- Keep in mind that 90% of caregivers reported improvements in mental health a year after the surgery.
- Three months after the surgery, feelings of uncertainty fell back to near-normal levels.
- Physical health (body pain for example) showed no long-term change.
- This long-term improvement in mental health was consistent with greater acceptance of the child’s condition and the new family reality.
- In the long-term G-tube surgery lowered anxiety and depression.

What resources are available to me and my child?

- Dieticians
- Resources explaining how feeding routines will affect daily life.
- Child life workers
- Social workers
- Consults and guidance from physicians.
- Julia Pond - Advanced Practice Nurse
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