

EMERGING MINDS AND RACGP WEBINAR SERIES 2023

Common practice challenges in child mental health

Webinar one

Connecting with families: Common practice challenges in child mental health

Thursday 30th March, 7.00–8.30pm (AEDT)

GPs are at the coalface of connecting and engaging with families where there are concerns about children's mental health and wellbeing. Based on a case study, this webinar will explore some of the challenges and opportunities faced by GPs in the "connect" phase of practice. The webinar will draw on the National Child Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy as the foundation to explore the important role of all general practice staff – non-clinical staff, practice nurses, practice managers and GPs in connecting with children and families.

Learning outcomes:

At the conclusion of this webinar, participants will be able to:

- Identify challenges that arise when engaging with children and families in general practice setting.
- Outline the benefits of a whole-of-practice approach in supporting families and children.



Case study

Four-year-old Leo lives with his parents Josh and Rebecca and his nine-month-old younger sister, Willow. Josh and Rebecca try to be good parents, despite increasing financial pressures and longer work hours for Josh at the small accounting firm he has worked at for four years.

Leo is regarded by extended family and friends as a particularly active child, but Rebecca and Josh have increasing concerns about his unwillingness to follow directions – for example to pack up toys or get ready for pre-school. He often seems to not listen to instructions or will run to another room if he doesn't want to do something. A couple of times he has run away from Rebecca when visiting a park and refused to return. This was hugely worrying for his parents. Settling Leo for bed is a regular challenge, as are his wakeful periods during the night. The pre-school educators have also provided feedback that Leo finds it difficult to sit still during story-time.

Rebecca has recently wondered if an ear ache is affecting her son, but particularly wants to discuss with the GP her broader concerns about Leo's behaviour and social skills.

The full waiting room at their local GP clinic only seems to heighten Leo's busyness, and the limited number of toys provide little distraction as he becomes bored, disruptive, and starts to annoy Willow. Among strangers Rebecca seems embarrassed by his behaviour and how her chastising him has little consequence.

The reception staff suggest to Rebecca that they are welcome to wait at the park across the road, and they would contact Rebecca when the GP was ready. Rebecca declined the suggestion, given her worry about Leo's impulsiveness in public.

By late morning on the day of the appointment the GP is already running 45 minutes late and feels rushed as he begins the first consultation with Rebecca and her family.

The consultation begins somewhat chaotically, with Leo 'bouncing' around the room, requesting snacks from his mother, and being determined to grab her phone. Leo's continued poking of Willow upsets her.

Rebecca's efforts to quieten both Leo and Willow fall on deaf ears. It's clear to the GP she's becoming increasingly frustrated towards her children and apologetic towards the GP.

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