



A qualitative evaluation of the challenges faced by dietitians when interviewing children



Stefanie J. Sharman*, Martine B. Powell, Helen Skouteris

School of Psychology, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood, VIC, 3125, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 29 November 2015

Received in revised form

28 January 2016

Accepted 9 February 2016

Available online 12 February 2016

Keywords:

Children

Diet

Interview

Health professionals

ABSTRACT

Background: Investigative interviewing is a critical and challenging skill involved in the assessment and design of appropriate interventions for children's dietary problems. The current study provided an evaluation of the challenges faced by professional dietitians when conducting child investigative interviews, in the hope that this would provide a framework for the development of further guidance and resources in this important area.

Methods: Fourteen professional dietitians were interviewed; they were asked about the information that they needed to elicit from children in particular situations and the questions that they would ask to do so. They were also asked to describe the strengths and limitations of the techniques that they used.

Results: The results revealed that professionals faced three main challenges. The first challenge was eliciting information from children who did not want to answer questions. The second challenge was determining the level of accuracy in children's (and caregivers') responses. The third challenge was eliciting very specific information in particular situations, such as determining the cause of an allergic reaction.

Conclusions: Overall, professionals had difficulty articulating the questions that they would use to elicit the information that they required; indeed, their responses focused more on the content that they wanted to elicit (such as specific details) rather than the overall process that they would use to do so. Professionals may benefit from the development of guidelines to assist them in their interviews with children, based on what is currently known about interviewing children generally.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Investigative interviewing—the process of eliciting accurate and detailed information about an event or situation—is a critical skill for many professionals who work with children (Powell, Fisher, & Wright, 2005). It is a particularly important skill for dietitians who rely on an accurate understanding of the food and drinks that children consumed (either generally or around the time of a particular bodily symptom) in order to design an appropriate intervention. However, many factors can influence children's reports of what they consumed, including difficulties in estimating portion sizes (Livingstone, Robson, & Wallace, 2004). Dietitians may rely on children's caregivers to provide accurate reports about what the children consumed, but they are not always present, such as when children are at school, another parent's house, or a friend's house. Interviewing children is a complex skill because the

language and memory of children is still developing and because the professional interviewer must demonstrate autonomy, judgement and responsibility within broad parameters (Ceci & Bruck, 1995). Not only do case details and individual children differ, there are many factors that need to be considered when conducting an interview.

The last 15 years of research have led to a clear consensus about how investigative interviews with children should generally be conducted. These interviews can take place in many different contexts for a variety of reasons, such as police interviews with children alleging abuse and teachers' questioning of children showing possible signs of abuse that they are mandated to report (e.g., Brubacher, Powell, Skouteris, & Guadagno, 2014). The consensus in investigative interviews is illustrated by the consistency and similarity of various interview protocols. Further, research on how interviewing is best learnt has evolved considerably (see Powell, 2008; for a review). However, little guidance has filtered into the dietetics literature. Although some research has focused on eliciting children's dietary consumption under

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: stefanie.sharman@deakin.edu.au (S.J. Sharman), martine.powell@deakin.edu.au (M.B. Powell), helen.skouteris@deakin.edu.au (H. Skouteris).

controlled settings to determine how accurately their reports reflect what they consumed, the focus tends to be on the types of errors that children make, such as reporting foods that were not consumed and failing to report foods that were consumed (e.g., Harrington, Kohler, McClure, & Franklin, 2009; Lyng et al., 2013). For example, Baxter et al. (2003) examined whether asking children about their consumption was more accurate when they were questioned using a meal format or an open format. In the meal format, children were asked about everything that they had consumed for breakfast, followed by lunch, and then dinner, etc. In the open format, children were asked about everything that they had consumed beginning with the first item that they recalled and moving through each eating occasion in turn. The results showed that children's reports were more accurate when they were interviewed using an open format than a meal format.

Overall, several broad recommendations have evolved from this research examining children's accuracy in controlled settings in order to guide clinicians (see Sharman, Skouteris, Powell, & Watson, 2016). First, it is suggested that children are interviewed as soon as possible after the event(s) of interest (e.g., Baxter, Royer, Guinn, Hardin, & Smith, 2009; Baxter, Thompson, Davis, & Johnson, 1997; Baxter, Hardin, et al., 2009; Baxter, Royer, et al., 2009). Second, children should be asked about one target meal (e.g., lunch) rather than all meals (Baxter & Thompson, 2002). Third, children should only be interviewed about diet, rather than diet in conjunction with other health behaviours, such as physical activity (Baxter et al., 2013, 2014). To what degree, however, do the existence of these guidelines provide support to capture the complexity of interviewing in the field? Further, assuming that the guidelines are sufficient, how easy is it to apply them in practice? In other investigative interviewing areas, a major gap exists between what is recommended and what is usually practiced (Benson & Powell, 2015; Brubacher, Powell, Skouteris, & Guadagno, 2015; Turoy-Smith & Powell, 2016). Despite consensus of what constitutes best-practice interviewing and the provision of specialised training, this gap has appeared in almost every evaluation of interviewer performance across the globe (e.g., Davies, Wilson, Mitchell, & Milsom, 1995; Warren et al., 1999). Indeed, specialised training does not always capture the complexities of the field. Therefore, one way in which to address this gap is to improve the training that professionals receive.

The current study addresses the limitations in the existing literature (albeit in part) by exploring in detail dietitians' perceptions of the interviewing process, the degree to which this is challenging and the nature (if at all) of any challenges involved in conducting investigative interviews with children. The participants were dietitians with different backgrounds who were working in a variety of settings and saw children for a number of diet-related reasons.

1. Method

1.1. Participants

Fourteen professionals participated in the study (12 females and 2 males). The mean age of the participants was 42.5 years ($SD = 14.2$, range: 27–70 years). Six participants were located in Victoria, four in Queensland, three in New South Wales, and one in Western Australia. All participants held degrees in the field of nutrition and dietetics, such as Bachelors, Graduate Diplomas, Masters, and other Post-Graduate degrees. Participants had an average of 18 years' experience (ranging from 5 to 47 years), and had interviewed an average of 3000 child clients (ranging from 50 to 9000 children). All participants were practicing in the field of nutrition and dietetics at the time of their interview; they worked in private practice and/or clinical settings such as hospitals, medical

clinics and government departments. Six of the participants worked solely in the area of paediatric dietetics.

1.2. Materials and procedure

Ethics approval to conduct the study was granted. Publicly available databases listing contact information of dietitians and nutritionists were examined for professionals who worked with children. Ninety-three professionals were contacted via phone and invited to participate in the current study. Of these, 16 agreed to participate, seven no longer saw children, seven were on leave, six were not interested in participating, and four no longer worked there. Calls to the other 49 professionals went to voicemail and a message was left. If the professionals did not return the call ($n = 46$), one further call was made to invite them to participate. The other three contacted the researchers and agreed to participate.

The 19 professionals who agreed to participate were sent a Plain Language Statement and consent form and scheduled a time to be interviewed. However, four professionals did not respond to the email or a further phone call; one professional arranged an interview time but did not answer the phone at this time. The 14 completed interviews were conducted via telephone. The interviewer had a PhD in Psychology and was experienced in qualitative research, having conducted many focus groups. Each interview lasted approximately 20 min.

Participants gave informed consent before being interviewed. A structured interview protocol was used in order to elicit as much information as possible from the professionals about the questions that they asked children and the perceived effectiveness of those questions. Interviews began with the collection of demographic information: professionals provided their age, qualifications, number of years working in the field of dietetics and nutrition, and their approximate number of interviews with children. Next, they were asked about their current role, including the nature of their work and the type of the information that they needed to elicit directly from children about their diet. Professionals were then given a scenario in which a 7-year-old child was referred to them. They were asked to describe (as specifically as possible) the questions that they would use to elicit the information they required. Professionals were asked how (if at all) these questions might vary across individuals with different ages and cultural backgrounds. Next, they reflected on any strengths or limitations of the interview questions they used in this scenario. Finally, professionals were asked to think back to a particular case in which they struggled to get information from a child; they were asked to describe the circumstances and the result of the case.

1.3. Data analysis

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriber. The NVivo10 software package was used to support a thematic analysis of the whole data set. A thematic analysis was used to identify patterns within the transcripts to describe and exemplify participants' subjective perceptions. Thematic analysis involves searching across a data set to find repeated patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this exploratory study, an inductive approach was taken so that the themes were strongly linked to the data themselves, rather than to theory (Patton, 2002). Themes were considered to capture important aspects of the data in relation to the aim of the study, which was to explore professionals' perceptions of the challenges that they faced when trying to elicit dietary information from children.

Individual transcripts were read by the first author to develop a global understanding of professionals' perceptions of the questions that they asked children to elicit dietary information. Re-reading of

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7307510>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7307510>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)