

Who Blends and Why?

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Abstract

This mixed methodology study investigated the reasons parents and carers use blended diet with their gastrostomy-fed children. Data for the qualitative phase was derived from in-depth 18 interviews and analysis of posts from 30 blogs, both of which were then analyzed using thematic analysis. Themes from the qualitative phase and findings from a literature review were used to inform the content of an online questionnaire, which was completed by a total of 204 families 140 of whom used blended diet, and 64 who did not. Demographic information from the two groups did not reveal statistically significant differences. Families who used blended diet were asked about their rationale for doing so, the types of blended foods they used and about how often they used blended diet. Themes of loss conflict empowerment and quality of life were identified in the qualitative phase. The quantitative phase revealed significant differences between families who did and did not use blended diet. These included concerns about potential harm from formula feeds and the perceived need for it, concerns about the overuse of medicines in general, levels of parental self-efficacy. Parents of children using BD reported more normal stools and better overall health. The study revealed many families who use blended diet lead highly complex lives, social media is influential, and there remain opposing views and beliefs between healthcare professionals and families. Finally the study highlights the need for further evidence regarding the potential benefits of blended diets.

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