Evaluating a Menstrual Hygiene Management Intervention for Youth on the Autism Spectrum

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Gaps in menstrual-related research for persons on the autism spectrum are evident in areas involving puberty education and intervention services, as well as, the inclusion of technologies to address such needs. Previous studies, intending to improve MHM skills for persons with neurodevelopmental disabilities (ND), have applied in-person training modalities and less innovative instructional materials (e.g., dolls, images, written social stories). While telehealth has shown promising results in providing assessment and other-related services to individuals with ND, there has been little research to investigate its usefulness in improving MHM skills for those on the autism spectrum. Additionally, video modeling with live-models has produced consistent, positive results in improving daily living skills (DLS); however, few studies have demonstrated the efficacy of an animated video model in advancing DLS, in particular those associated with MHM. The purpose of our two-month research study was to evaluate the efficacy and acceptability of 1) telehealth as a modality to deliver a behaviorally-designed training package to caregivers, and 2) animated video as a model to remove and replace a sanitary napkin for children on the autism spectrum. The sample includes six caregiver and child dyads who were recruited from local autism assessment and service-provision clinics. Attendees of this presentation will receive an explanation of the relevant MHM research and development process for the animated video model, as well as the outcomes from the study. Immediately following the presentation, attendees may participate in a discussion on future applications.