



# Parent satisfaction with group therapy for children with cerebral palsy and balance problems

Asila Alia Noordin, Senior Physiotherapist, KKH  
Chaw Chaw Su, Physiotherapist, KKH  
Maheswari Vellaichamy, Senior Physiotherapist, KKH

## INTRODUCTION

Individual therapy is known to be an effective but expensive model of therapy. To ensure the most efficient use of resources, group therapy should be evaluated for its time efficiency and cost effectiveness (Auld & Johnston, 2014). Group therapy for children has been shown to have positive effects on strength, function and therapy compliance (Johnston, 2004). There is currently a lack of group classes for children with cerebral palsy (CP) and neurological conditions despite the benefits shown. A pilot group program conducted by physiotherapists (PT) at KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) during the December 2015 school holidays was aimed to:

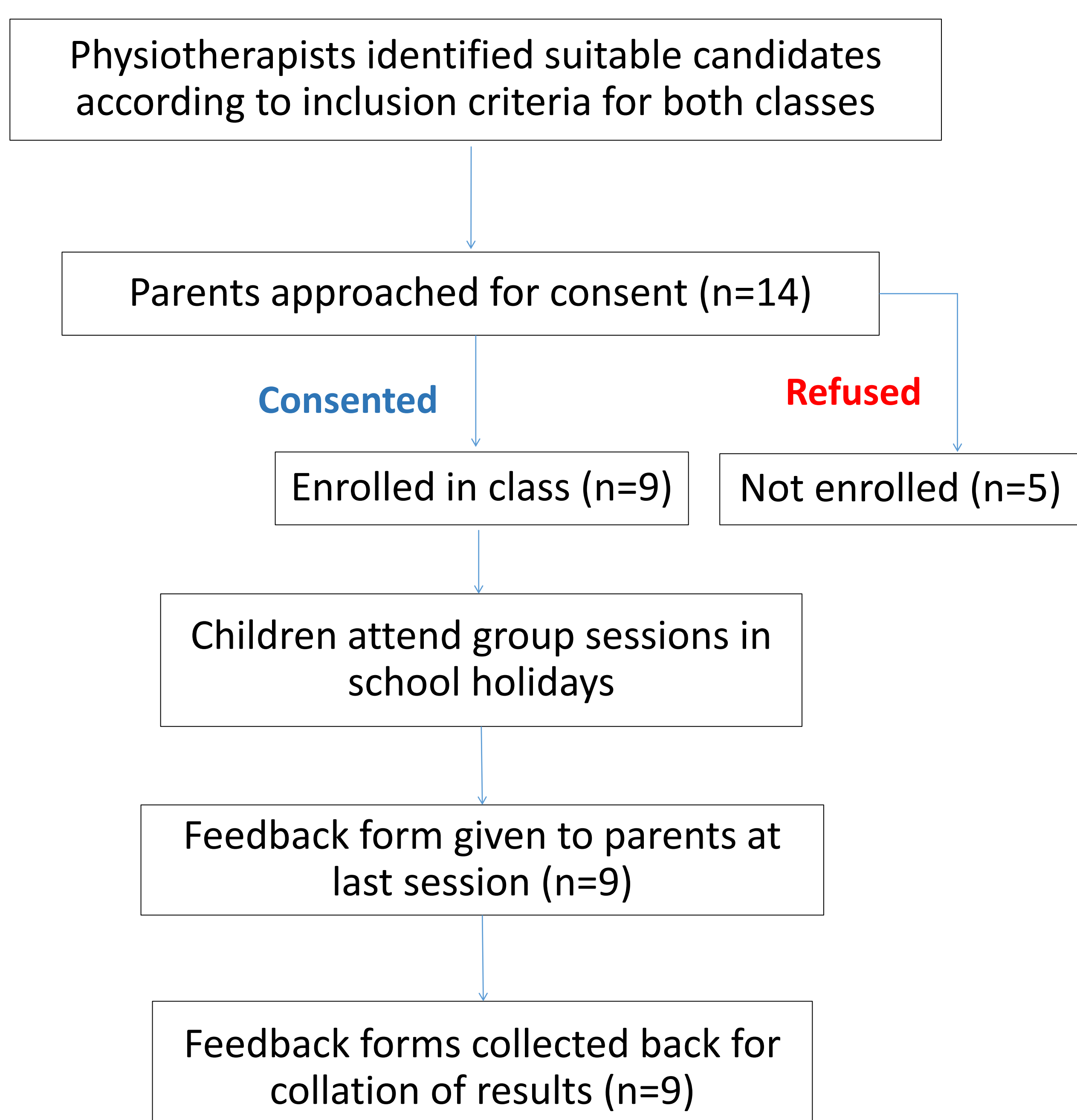
- Provide frequent physiotherapy sessions at lower cost for these children during school holidays.
- Improve patients' functional mobility, active participation and interaction with peers in the group setting.
- Improve parent satisfaction with therapy frequency.

## OBJECTIVES

This pilot study investigated parent satisfaction and perception of effectiveness of a group for children with diplegic CP and a balance class for independently ambulating children with a variety of neurological conditions. The aim was to use the results of this study to justify the use of manpower and space to conduct weekly group classes for such children at KKH.

## METHOD

Children with diplegic CP, Gross Motor Functional Classification System (GMFCS) II-III, aged 4-7 years were recruited for a pilot CP group physiotherapy class. Children with balance issues, aged 7-12 years, who were able to walk independently and understand instructions, were recruited for a pilot balance group class. Both were conducted during the 2015 December school holidays at the physiotherapy department of KKH. Each session was charged at \$23 per child. The class was conducted by one PT and one therapy assistant in the physiotherapy gym at KKH for one hour weekly (5 weeks for CP class and 4 weeks for balance group).



## RESULTS

All survey forms (n=9) distributed were returned. Parents reported:

- ✓ Satisfaction with the sessions and felt that their children had benefitted (100%)
- ✓ Improved interaction with peers (78%)
- ✓ Improved compliance to therapy (56%)
- ✓ Improved exercise tolerance (67%)
- ✓ Group classes more affordable than individual sessions (50% COST SAVINGS)
- ✓ Parents were not aware of such services elsewhere (100%)
- ✓ Parents wanted such classes to be organised on a weekly basis throughout the year (88%).

## CONCLUSION

Previous studies on group classes in this population investigated mainly objective measures of strength and balance but failed to assess parent satisfaction (Blundell et al., 2003). Our results show that parent satisfaction with group therapy is high. Group therapy also results in cost savings for parents and more efficient utilisation of space and manpower for the department as one PT was able to attend to more than 1 patient in an hour in an outpatient setting. Hence despite our small study numbers, this study indicates that a short programme of strength and balance training for young diplegic children and children with balance issues, run in a group class format is mutually beneficial and may be a useful service delivery model to adopt. This supports conducting group physiotherapy sessions during school holidays by PTs at KKH.

### The future of group physiotherapy classes at KKH

A randomised controlled trial, with a control group receiving regular individual therapy, should be done to investigate if parent satisfaction is greater in one group over another. Assessment of child quality of life should also be investigated for a more holistic understanding of the effects of physiotherapy.



## REFERENCES

Auld, M. L & Johnston, M. L. (2014). "Strong and steady": a community-based strength and balance exercise group for children with cerebral palsy. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 36(24), 2065-071.

Blundell, S., Shepherd, C., Dean, R. & Adams, R. (2003). Functional strength training in cerebral palsy: a pilot study of a group circuit training class for children aged 4-8 years. *Clinical Rehabilitation*, 17, 48-57.

Johnston, L. M., Burns, Y. R. & Brauer, S. G. (2004). A school-based, group physiotherapy intervention program for postural stability to improve motor coordination for children with DCD: a randomised controlled trial. *Australian Journal of Physiotherapy*, 50(5).