

# Executive summary: An evaluation of the impact of the online Community of Practice, “Working in the community with children with cerebral palsy”

*What is the role of a global Community of Practice in supporting the training of health care practitioners? Lessons learnt from a community disability training programme.*

Date: July 2019

Authors: Sally Parsley, Kelly James & Maria Zuurmond

## Acknowledgements

There are so many people to thank in the development, contribution to, and evaluation of this Community of Practice. It has been a learning journey for all of us. We would like to say a particular thank you to the advisory committee for the CoP and to our disability champions. And a thank you to all of those members who have engaged with the CoP and the evaluation in one form or another.

Thank you to CBM International for the funding of the Community of Practice.

© 2019 International Centre for Evidence in Disability, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. This work is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 licence ([CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/))



## Executive Summary

*The CoP can be used to find ways to bring expertise and resources together, it allows the little man with lots of lived experience to access scientific research, knowledge and to share their own. Its strength is in offering a space to share diverse opinions in a non- confrontational way.*

- An on-line Community of Practice (CoP) was established in spring 2014 to support the roll out of a training programme for caregivers entitled "Getting to know cerebral palsy" (GTKCP). The overall aim was to support the use of accompanying parent training manual developed by the project (the GTKCP manual), and also to encourage good practice generally in community-based work with children with cerebral palsy.
- Currently the CoP has 412 members spread across 72 countries. This consists of parents, practitioners and academics.
- This was a mixed methods evaluation. It included a baseline and end-line survey, in-depth interviews, a membership analysis, and a thematic content analysis of messages posted over a 16-month period.
- Two years after the launch of the CoP there were 233 members from 57 countries and 54% of the membership were from low and middle-income countries.
- Most contributions were sharing knowledge and resources. Discussions about the training manual were a catalyst to a wider range of discussions and wider resource sharing. Approximately half of the postings related to the manual and half about more general working with children with cerebral palsy and other neurodevelopmental conditions.
- 51% felt that the CoP had helped them increase their skills, 44% that it had challenged some of their attitudes and 42% that it had helped them expand their knowledge.
- A key theme of the evaluation was the value placed on sharing encouragement and reassurance in how to use the manual. Summarised here by one interviewee: *"It has really improved my own knowledge, because I now know this lady in in South Africa ...and meeting such people [on-line] has made me feel that I'm on the right track"*
- Finding out what others are doing and what is possible was seen to be a key benefit of the CoP, particularly when members first began to use the manual. Practically, it was helpful to connect with people in the same country, and to also find out if local translations of the material were available. This networking also led to collaborations on translations in a variety of languages.
- In terms of improved delivery of the manual, 46% agreed/strongly agreed that they had made changes to their working practice using knowledge gained from the CoP. 20% had used the GTKCP manual for running parent groups, as intended. Interestingly, 62% had used the manual for general training of staff and community volunteers.
- The human networking element of the CoP was highlighted as the most important benefit of the CoP. Aside from global networking, it frequently resulted in finding people to contact from within a country, which then often opened up other avenues of support.
- Social knowledge-building, that is problem-solving and co-creation of knowledge through interactions, was less evident in the CoP discussions. There was some evidence that some more in-depth discussions were taken off-line.
- A key enabling factor appeared to be the very supportive environment for the community.
- Although only a small percentage of members frequently posted, it was evident from the interviews and survey that other members were content to learn through being passive members: *"I have been reading more than contributing to this forum enjoying and benefiting from the rich experience this forum brings."*