



Efforts to Maintain the Health of Children with Special Needs (ABK) During the Pandemic through Online Education Seminars

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ABSTRACT

Sudden changes that cover all aspects of life in a short time, such as what happened during the current COVID-19 pandemic, can pose challenges to not only the children with special needs, but also their parents / guardians. This community service activity is carried out in the form of online educational seminars on efforts to maintain the health of children with special needs during the pandemic for parents / guardians of children with special needs who attend SLB C Karya Ibu Palembang and also common populace. This activity aims to provide a better understanding to parents / guardians of children with special needs about what children with special needs may face and live with during the pandemic.

Keywords: Pandemic, COVID-19, Children with special needs

INTRODUCTION

Given the current pandemic situation, which is currently developing, various approaches to overcome it have been carried out. One of the efforts to control the transmission of SARS-CoV2 and reduce the incidence of COVID-19, among others, is the policy to stay at home so that you can work, study and worship at home, in addition to policies to maintain distance, wash hands, and wear masks on the spot general.

Changes in all aspects of life affect all levels of society without exception, including vulnerable populations such as children with special needs (ABK). ABK in general are vulnerable to certain health issues, and in general they also need routine therapy.

With limited access due to health protocols during the pandemic period, the health of ABK will be more or less affected. A better understanding of what children with special needs may face and live with during the pandemic can help their parents / guardians in undergoing the COVID-19 pandemic, including the parents



/ guardians of students with special needs who are attending SLB C Karya Ibu Palembang.

Online educational seminars for parents / guardians of students with special needs at SLB C Karya Ibu Palembang aim to provide information about health related to children with special needs so that they can help maintain the health of children with special needs during the pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With policy changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic such as staying at home, limiting activities outside the home, and studying from home, the daily routine of children with special needs has also been disrupted. ABK like children with *Autism Spectrum Disorder* (ASD) generally have stereotypical, patterned and repetitive behaviors,^{1,2,3} so that patterned, routine, and scheduled activities are what they enjoy. By definition, *Autism Spectrum Disorder* (ASD) is a developmental disorder characterized by qualitative abnormalities in reciprocal social interactions and in communication patterns, as well as limited, stereotypical and repetitive interests and activities.⁴ Changes in routine such as those that occur as a result of a pandemic can lead to the emergence of anxiety and stress on ABK.⁵

The temporary closure of schools which results in the implementation of distance learning can also pose challenges for the children with special needs. At least it is known that 131 countries around the world are still closing schools due to the pandemic.⁶ A total of 990.925.124 students were also affected by the closure of this school, including students with special needs.⁶ The closure of this school not only affects the access of children with special needs to education, but also their access to health services and support, because there are also schools that provide health services for children with special needs.^{7,8}

Various studies during the pandemic stated that children with special needs tend to show more frequent and more intense behavioral problems than before the pandemic.⁵ This behavior disorder is also thought to be caused by the policy of schooling from home. This shows that school is actually an important factor in the life of children with special needs.



METHOD

This community service activity is carried out in the form of an online educational seminar through the Zoom conference application on Saturday, November 14, 2020. Participants of this online education seminar are parents / guardians of SLB C Karya Ibu Palembang students and also a total of 100 ordinary people. person. The material was presented by four resource persons with different competencies and scientific backgrounds, namely medical genetics, microbiology, mental health, and pharmacology. The four materials presented have a common thread in the form of efforts to understand the pandemic and its relation to the crew members, as well as efforts to maintain the health of the crew members during the pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Drastic changes in all aspects of life due to the COVID-19 pandemic can affect the health of children with special needs such as people with ASD. Dissemination of information about what parents / guardians of children with special needs will face during the pandemic based on the knowledge of their child's condition can help them maintain and even improve the health of children with special needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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