**Abstract (250-350 words):**

Becoming a confident communicator is important for school-aged children in multiple contexts, from learning in the classroom to building positive interpersonal relationships with peers. Stuttering is a complex, multifactorial speech condition which can be characterized by disfluencies in speech (e.g., sound repetitions) as well as socio-emotional effects (e.g., avoidance of speaking). Students who stutter may experience negative impacts on academic and social participation if challenges are not addressed (1-2).

Historically, students who stutter receive individual speech-language therapy in school. In Developmental Pediatrics and Rehabilitation at McMaster Children’s Hospital – Ron Joyce Children’s Health Centre (RJCHC), feedback from multiple stakeholders (including clinicians, students/families, schools) have identified that introduction of group sessions would be beneficial for two reasons. First, group therapy facilitates peer-support, which research has shown is an important element in effective stuttering therapy (3). Second, group therapy allows for students at multiple schools to be seen together, thus creating service efficiencies which help reduce waitlist times.

In this pilot program, clinicians developed three stuttering groups, offered virtually over March break, and both in-person and virtually over summer break. Each group consisted of 2-5 students. To best meet student needs, their interests, group readiness, and availability were considered in participation. To support social participation and improve the socio-emotional effects associated with stuttering, the focus of the sessions was on providing a supportive environment for students to communicate with each other, identifying shared experiences, and developing skills such as self-advocacy. Students learned about strategies to increase speech fluency and practice in functional activities, such as ordering at a fast food restaurant or introducing themselves to a new classmate. During in-person sessions, the group was able to take advantage of RJCHC’s Sports Zone gym to incorporate activity and movement into the sessions.

Overall, the pilot program was seen as highly valuable by the students/families and clinicians. In post-program surveys, students responded that they enjoyed meeting other students who stutter and felt more confident communicating. Future program goals will focus on addressing specific age groups (e.g., teens) and incorporating opportunities for parent/teacher engagement (e.g., workshops).