Early Childhood Programs

Review 5

McConachie, H., & Diggle, T. (2007). Parent implemented early intervention for young children with autism spectrum disorder: A systematic review. *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice, 13*, 120–129. PubMed abstract available at http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17286734.

Objectives	Assess the effectiveness of parent-implemented early interventions for young children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).
Studies Included	Twelve U.S. and international studies from 1981 to 2004
Participants in the Studies	Parents and their children, aged 1 to 6 years 11 months, diagnosed with ASD, including autism, Asperger's syndrome, pervasive developmental disorder (PDD), and PDD not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS)
Settings	Settings were not reported for the studies.
Outcomes	**Child outcomes:** social-communication skills, intelligence quotient (IQ), parent and teacher report of adaptive skills and problem behavior **Parent/caregiver outcomes:** knowledge about autism and teaching strategies, observed communication behaviors when with child, stress levels
Limitations of the Studies	Only a few studies have evaluated parent training compared to no training in a randomized controlled trial; all the studies have methodological shortcomings, particularly with regard to small sample sizes; studies were either short term, or they reported outcomes only for parents, or they showed mixed results for children; mechanism of effect is not clear from studies; independent clinicians did not carry out study assessments; little information was provided about the number of people the study was offered to, how many declined, and how many were excluded; diagnostic tools were not specified; there was lack of follow-up assessment.

Results

The involvement of parents as cotherapists in implementing interventions for their children diagnosed with ASD, PDD, Asperger's syndrome, or PDD-NOS was examined. The length of time between baseline and follow-up assessments ranged from 2 months to 4 years. Results indicate there is sufficient evidence that parent-implemented early intervention can improve children's social communication skills. The parent-implemented interventions had positive effects for parents, including increased parental knowledge about autism, improved parent-child interactions, and reduced parental stress. Finally, results indicate that training parents as cotherapists may reduce maternal depressive symptoms, and parents may generalize their new skills to other

offspring. Overall, it appears parent-implemented interventions can successfully contribute to treatment designed for young children with ASD.