Early Childhood Programs

Review 6

Reichow, B., & Wolery, M. (2009). Comprehensive synthesis of early intensive behavioral interventions for young children with autism based on the UCLA young autism project model. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 39*, 23–31. PubMed abstract available at http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18535894.

Objectives	Provide a comprehensive synthesis of the studies on early intensive behavioral intervention (EIBI) for young children with autism.
Studies Included	Thirteen U.S. and international studies published from 1987 to 2007
Participants in the Studies	Children diagnosed with autism, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), pervasive developmental disorder (PDD), or PDD not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), who were less than 84 months old at the start of intervention
Settings	Settings were not reported for all the studies.
Outcomes	Intelligence quotient (IQ), adaptive behavior, academic placement after treatment, expressive and receptive language skills, severity of autistic symptoms, diagnostic reclassification (percentage of participants meeting Lovaas' recovery criteria)
Limitations of the Studies	Little was known about the comparison condition of included studies; there was little uniformity across included studies; studies lacked standardization within groups, had few measures of procedural fidelity, and had no data on whether participants received supplemental treatments; there was no verification on the use of treatment manuals; no studies reported measuring therapy implementation at a level sufficient to draw definitive conclusions about quality or similarity of therapy across participants or within a participant across therapists; many studies used nonrandom assignment, limiting conclusions about the superiority of EIBI to other treatments; inclusion criteria for studies used in this review were narrow, increasing the possibility of publication bias.

Results

The effect of EIBIs on young children with autism was examined by comparing their cognitive skills pre- and postintervention. Descriptive analyses indicate that EIBI based on the UCLA Young Autism Project is an effective intervention for many children with autism. Specifically, postintervention academic placement and diagnostic reclassification data suggest some children will perform well in typical education settings after intervention. Psychopathology outcome data suggest that, on average, children present fewer or less severe

autism symptoms after intervention. Effect size analyses suggest children receiving EIBI made more gains in expressive and receptive language, adaptive behaviors, and IQ than children receiving minimal behavioral intervention, eclectic treatment, or treatment as usual. Meta-analysis indicated there was a large, statistically significant effect for increasing IQ scores for EIBI participants. Analysis suggests the greatest effects on IQ change might be seen when supervisory staff are trained using the UCLA model, when the intervention is of long duration, and when there is a high number of hours of therapy.