

Treatments for high functioning Autism

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Introduction: Research on effective treatments for high functioning autism (HFA) is in its infancy. Preliminary studies have shown behavioral improvements using targeted cognitive behavioral techniques and parent training (Crooke, P.J., Hendrix, R.E., Rachman, J.Y., 2007, and Prizant, 2009). Children on the high-functioning end of the autism spectrum are now ubiquitous in mainstream classrooms across the world, because they do not qualify for self-contained special education classrooms. These children are at risk for academic and social challenges, which will create a significant public health issue as these children age out of school and are unprepared for the social and organizational challenges of college and the workplace.

Method: 2 case studies of children, who are undergoing targeted 1:1 intervention for social communication skills, using cognitive behavioural therapy and parent education, will be presented.

Results: Preliminary results from case studies of children between the ages of 5-10 on the high-functioning end of the spectrum will be presented, including use of specific skills in context, and responses on parent report via questionnaire. Intervention strategies will be presented as a model for best practices.

Summary: Current best practices for direct teaching social of communication skills (Winner, 2009 and Prizant, 2008) and technology-based group interventions will be discussed and reviewed. The limitations of the study design and implications for future research in this critical area will be discussed.

Biography

Jennifer Minnelli is a Speech Language Pathologist who has worked with children with special needs for the past 15 years. Her career has spanned a variety of settings, including Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Early Intervention Centers, Private Outpatient Clinics, Preschool classrooms and Elementary School classrooms. She is President and co-founder of rubycube, the company that develops mobile apps for exceptional minds (www.rubycubeapps.com). Jennifer also works as a clinician at Duke University Medical Center in acute care pediatrics and outpatient pediatrics.

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