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Outcomes of a neuro developmentally based early intervention model with children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders: Treatment modalities that worked

Background: Abundance of research findings show complex and multilevel developmental delays and retardation of brain developmental systems of (A) regulatory; (B) somatosensory processing; (C) relational and psycho-social; and (D) cortical/executive functioning, among children diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders. However, research on early intervention for young children (infants and toddlers) with FASD is limited.

Objective: To explore outcomes of a neurodevelopmentally based early intervention model with a group of young children with FASD and their adoptive caregivers, respectively.

Methods: Using a neurodevelopmentally based intervention protocol, young children with FASD and their adoptive caregivers in the study received mental health interventions, individualized according to the pre-test results of the measured brain developmental systems (A, B, C, and D). Pre-post evaluation methods were applied to measure changes on these brain developmental systems for the young children, and parenting styles, behaviors and concerns for the adoptive parents.

Results: The results showed substantial developmental improvements for the young children in the study on various developmental systems of A, B, C, and D, and positive improvements for their adoptive parents on all the measured domains.

Conclusion: Outcomes of this study shows (a) positive outcomes of a neurodevelopmentally based early intervention model with young children with FASD; (b) importance of early intervention on developing brain; (c) the importance of direct and full inclusion of the primary caregivers during the intervention process; (d) significant impacts of parenting education on the child's outcome; and (e) the importance of inter-disciplinary integrated care for the families of young children with FASD.

Biography

Zohreh Zarnegar, a clinical, neuro-pediatric psychologist, PhD from University of Southern California (USC), completed a NIMH postdoctoral fellowship in Preventive Medicine at USC Medical School. She has received awards for her expertise-services for health promotion, prevention and early intervention, and developing programs focusing on early childhood development, prevention of prenatal exposures to (1) trauma and maltreatment; and (2) drugs, particularly alcohol. She takes her messages around the world through teaching and training of the professionals. She is a Zero to Three Graduate Fellow, ChildTrauma Academy Fellow, and director of Children's Health International (CHI) serving families with young children worldwide.

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