

Sample Longitudinal Study

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A One-Year Followup of Children With Possible Autism ← *title of article*

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Abstract

Twenty-five children between the ages of 18 months and 3 years were referred to a diagnostic clinic for suspected autism spectrum disorder (ASD). They were evaluated for ASD using a standardized parent interview (Smith, 1995) and the Behavioral Rating Scales (Jones & Harper, 1989). The children who received a clinical diagnosis of ASD were re-evaluated one year later to determine if they still met the diagnostic criteria of ASD. Results revealed that diagnosis of ASD remained stable over time.

Introduction

Recently, there has been a movement towards early diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (Aaron, King, & Farquire, 2015). Because several scientists have determined that early intervention offers a greater chance to intervene, it is generally believed that the earlier the diagnosis of autism, the better the opportunity for early intervention (Blackman, 2015; Carlson, 2016; Rogers & Hammerstein, 2015). However, some child development specialists fear that a diagnosis of autism made before the age of 3 years old may be premature and that children diagnosed before the age of 3 may not meet the same diagnostic criteria after age 3 (Howell, Musselman, Treman et al., 2017). [The purpose of the present study was to determine if children who received a clinical diagnosis of ASD before their third birthday would still meet the diagnostic criteria of the disorder one year later.]

previous research cited

previous research cited

Research Question

Method

Subjects

The subjects were 20 males and 5 females between the ages of 18 months and 3 years, who were referred to a diagnostic clinic for suspected ASD. The 20 males consisted of 15 Caucasian, 3 African American, and 2 Asian children. The 5 females consisted of 3 African American and 2 Caucasian children.

Procedure

The subjects were evaluated for ASD using a standardized parent interview (Smith, 2015) and the Behavioral Rating Scales (Jones & Harper, 2018) at two points in time. All the subjects were evaluated at the time of initial intake (Time 1). The children who received a clinical diagnosis of ASD were re-evaluated one year later (Time 2) to determine if they still met the diagnostic criteria of ASD. Evaluations were conducted by independent clinicians at Time 1 and Time 2 to control for experimenter bias.

Results

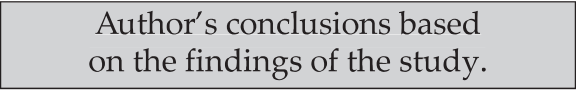
Inter-rater reliability between clinical assessments at Time 1 and Time 2 was assessed using Chronbach alpha correlation coefficients. Independent assessments using the parent interview and the results of the Behavioral Rating Scales demonstrated high rates of internal consistency, with mean scores on both instruments ranging between .65 and .97. See Table 1 for mean scores on the two subscales of the parent interview (Social Interaction and Communication) and the Behavioral Rating Scales.

Table 1. Interrater Reliabilities for the Three Subscales of the Parent Interview

Scale	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Social Interactions	.80	.97	.89
Communication	.72	.95	.84
Behavioral Rating Scales	.65	.88	.77

Discussion

The present study sought to determine if children who received a diagnosis of ASD before their third birthday would still meet the diagnostic criteria of the disorder one year later. The results of the study lend strong support to the argument for early diagnosis of ASD (Blackman, 2015; Carlson, 2016; Rogers & Hammerstein, 2015). Thus, the independent assessments by clinicians conducted when the children were under the age of 3 and one year later were highly consistent. [*Thus, based on the results of this study, we would advocate for early diagnosis of ASD.*]



Author's conclusions based
on the findings of the study.