

Research Developments

MayInstitute
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National Autism Center's National Standards Project

May Institute is taking a leadership role in establishing and sponsoring the National Autism Centersm, a new nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting effective, evidence-based treatment approaches to autism and providing direction to families, practitioners, organizations, policy-makers, and funders.

The first major initiative of the Center is a National Standards Project to establish and ratify a set of standards for evidence-based education and behavioral intervention for children with autism. This project is being chaired by Executive Director, Joseph N. Ricciardi, Psy.D., ABPP, BCBA.

The Center has convened a panel of national experts on education and behavioral intervention for children with autism to coordinate the National Standards Project. Several May Institute staff members are participating, including: James K. Luiselli, Ed.D., ABPP, BCBA; Tania Trembl, M.Ed, BCBA; Jane Carlson, Ph.D., BCBA; Susan Thibadeau, Ph.D., BCBA; and Alan Harchik, Ph.D., BCBA. The panel also includes experts from around the country such as Edward G. Carr, Ph.D.; Gina Green, Ph.D., BCBA; Sandra Harris, Ph.D.; Gail McGee, Ph.D.; Raymond Romanczyk, Ph.D.,

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Intervention to Improve Peer Sharing

Children with autism often lack social skills, which negatively influences their interactions with peers. In this study, a 4-year-old boy with autism was exposed to a multi-component intervention plan that targeted his verbal and physical sharing among typical peers in an integrated preschool classroom. Before his daily play sessions, he practiced sharing with a peer and an instructor who directed and demonstrated desirable behaviors (priming). During actual play, the instructor prompted the boy to share and then offered contingent praise.

Compared to an initial baseline phase, verbal and physical sharing increased with intervention. Physical sharing decreased when only the prompting and social reinforcement components of intervention were provided. With the full intervention plan, the child's physical sharing occurred at a frequency comparable to his peers, and it was judged highly acceptable by the classroom staff responsible for implementation. He was able to maintain his improved verbal and physical sharing with ongoing intervention.

The publication citation for the study is: Sawyer, L.M., Luiselli, J.K., Ricciardi, J.N., & Gower, J.L. (2005). Teaching a child with autism to share among peers in an integrated preschool classroom: Acquisition, maintenance, and social validation. *Education and Treatment of Children, 28*, 1-10.

Overcoming Pediatric Feeding Disorders

Many children with autism have a feeding disorder characterized by limited consumption and selective eating. In this study, a 4-year-old girl who had autism and food selectivity was taught to drink milk through a liquid fading procedure. Before intervention, she refused to drink whole milk. The feeding protocol consisted of gradually increasing the concentration of milk in a beverage she consumed 100 percent of the time. Educational staff implemented the intervention in a school setting. Milk consumption was achieved rapidly without interruption to the fading sequence and maintained following intervention.

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Two children share toys at a May Institute school.

Recent Publications

- Kane, A., Luiselli, J.K., Dearborn, S., & Young, N. (2005). Wearing a weighted vest as intervention for children with autism/PDD: Behavioral assessment of stereotypy and attention to task. *Scientific Review of Mental Health Practice*, 3, 19-24.
- Luiselli, J.K., Putnam, R.F., Handler, M.W., & Feinberg, A.B. (2005). Whole-school positive behavior support: Effects on student discipline problems and academic performance. *Educational Psychology*, 25, 183-198.
- Luiselli, J.K., Dunn, E.K., & Pace, G.M. (2005). Antecedent assessment and intervention to reduce physical restraint (protective holding) of children and adolescents with acquired brain injury. *Behavioral Interventions*, 20, 51-65.
- Luiselli, J.K. & Russo, D.C. (Eds.) (2005). Innovations in behavioral healthcare and human service organizations. *Behavior Modification*, 29, 467-594.
- Luiselli, J.K., Sherak, D.L., Dunn, E.K., & Pace, G.M. (2005). Sexual behaviors among children and adolescents with acquired brain injury: An incidence survey at a community-based neurorehabilitation center. *Behavioral Interventions*, 20, 17-25.

NATIONAL STANDARDS PROJECT... continued from front

and other noteworthy researchers and practitioners.

Following guidelines development methods used in evidence-based medicine, the panelists will review clinical outcome research and identify the practices and procedures shown to have the greatest effectiveness in the education and treatment of children with autism. The result will be a set of evidence-based practices and program components outlined in a single document. The document will be extremely valuable to clinicians making clinical and educational recom-

mendations, and for families looking to identify the best program for their child.

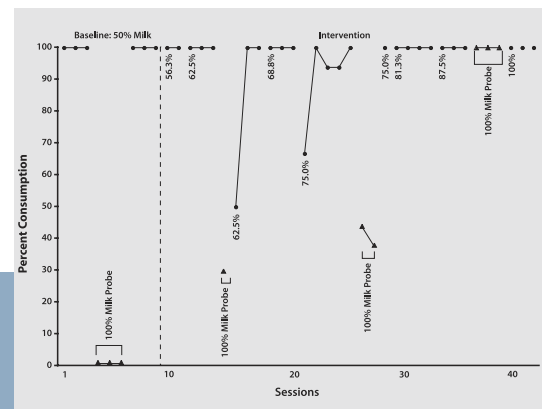
The project has been well received by the professional community. The Chief of Neurodevelopmental Disorders of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), Ann Wagner, Ph.D., noted that there is a "critical and urgent need" for dissemination of evidence-based approaches for autism. "This project has the potential for great benefit," she commented.

The work of the project has begun and is expected to be completed in the spring of 2006.

FEEDING DISORDERS ... continued from front

The publication citation for the study is: Luiselli, J.K., Ricciardi, J.N., & Gilligan, K. (2005). Liquid fading to establish milk consumption by a child with autism. *Behavioral Interventions*, 20, 155-163.

The graph shows results of a "liquid fading" intervention that enabled a 4-year-old girl to accept and drink whole milk, a beverage she previously refused.



May Center for Applied Research Relocates to Randolph

May Center for Applied Research has relocated to a new, state-of-the-art facility at 41 Pacella Park Drive in Randolph, Mass. It is now housed in a spacious, 80,000-square-foot building with May's corporate headquarters, the newest May Center for Child Development, and the newly established National Autism Center. The phone number remains the same (781-440-0400).

ABOUT MAY INSTITUTE

May Institute is a private, nonprofit organization committed to providing the highest standard of behavioral healthcare, educational, and rehabilitative services. Featured in the book "In Search of America's Best Nonprofits" (Jossey-Bass, 1997), May Institute has nearly 200 service locations nationwide, serving more than 25,000 individuals and families each year. An active center of research and training, we maintain affiliations with over 40 universities, hospitals, and agencies worldwide, and have a Professional Advisory Board comprised of leading authorities in the field.

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