


 RESEARCH DEVELOPMENTS
 

A Publication of the May Center for Applied Research

## EVIDENCE-BASED TREATMENTS

Evidence-based treatments refer to intervention procedures that have been derived from experimental research. A strategy or methodology is considered evidence-based when it is informed through scientific inquiry that meets consensus-determined professional standards.

At May Institute, our research efforts have consistently addressed educational and behavior support practices that have a strong empirical basis. We seek to identify procedures that can be implemented effectively within “real world” settings by the people who provide services.

Accordingly, the many studies May Institute publishes each year are conducted by our psychologists, teachers, therapists, and direct care staff. Our focus on evidence-based procedures allows us to disseminate research findings that can be applied to similar human service settings for children and adults who have unique learning and behavior challenges.

This issue of *Research Developments* includes information about the book, *Effective Practices for Children with Autism*; an update on the National Autism Center’s National Standards Project; and a list of recent May Institute publications. To request copies, contact Dr. James K. Luiselli, Senior Vice President for Applied Research, Clinical Training, and Peer Review at [jluiselli@mayinstitute.org](mailto:jluiselli@mayinstitute.org).

## New Autism Book Published

According to *Effective Practices for Children with Autism*, “Children who have autism require comprehensive educational and treatment services. There are a myriad of approaches currently recommended to practitioners and parents, but little is known about their efficacy. Which are the most effective in teaching skills, overcoming behavior challenges, and improving quality of life?”



These among are the topics addressed in the 528-page book edited by May Institute’s Walter P. Christian, Ph.D., ABPP, President and CEO; Dennis C. Russo, Ph.D., ABPP, Chief Clinical Officer; James K. Luiselli, Ed.D., ABPP, Senior Vice President of Applied Research, Clinical Training, and Peer Review; and Susan M. Wilczynski, Ph.D., BCBA, Executive Director, National Autism Center.

The book brings together multiple and contemporary perspectives on intervention effectiveness for autism education and behavior support. It provides an essential framework for evaluating educational and treatment procedures, selecting those that are most effective, and evaluating outcomes.

## National Standards Project Complete

The National Standards Project (NSP), the first major initiative of the National Autism Center, has been completed. The results of the project are available through the NSP *Findings and Conclusions* report – the most comprehensive analysis available to date of treatments for children and adolescents (below 22 years of age) with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

The multi-year project was conducted with support and guidance from an

expert panel of 45 nationally recognized scholars, researchers, and other leaders representing diverse fields of study. Under the leadership of Susan Wilczynski, Ph.D., BCBA, Executive Director of the National Autism Center, these expert panelists examined 775 research studies and identified the level of scientific evidence available for a broad range of treatments.

The NSP *Findings and Conclusions* report provides specific information about age groups, treatment targets,

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- Kozlowski, A., Wood, L., Gilligan, K., & Luiselli, J. K. (2009). Effects of nonverbal social disapproval on attention-maintained spitting and disruptive vocalizing in a child with autism. *Clinical Case Studies, 8*, 309-316.
- Ladd, M. V., Luiselli, J. K., & Baker, L. (2009). Continuous access to competing stimulation as intervention for self-injurious skin picking in a child with autism. *Child & Family Behavior Therapy, 31*, 54-60.
- Luiselli, J. K. (2009). Physical restraint of people with intellectual disability: A review of implementation reduction and elimination procedures. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disability, 22*, 126-134.
- Luiselli, J. K., DiGennaro Reed, F. D., Christian, W. P., Markowski, A., Rue, H. C., St. Amand, C., & Ryan, C. J. (2009). Effects of an informational brochure, lottery-based financial incentive, and public posting on absenteeism of direct-care human services employees. *Behavior Modification, 33*, 175-181.
- Reed, D. D., Luiselli, J. K., Magnuson, J., Fillers, S., Vieira, S., & Rue, H. C. (2009). A comparison between traditional economical and demand curve analyses of relative reinforcer efficacy in the validation of preference assessment predictions. *Developmental Neurorehabilitation, 12*, 164-169.
- Carlson, J. I., Luiselli, J. K., Slyman, A., & Markowski, A. (2008). Choice-making as intervention for public disrobing in children with developmental disabilities. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 10*, 86-90.
- Freidman, A., & Luiselli, J. K. (2008). Excessive daytime sleep: Behavioral assessment and intervention in a child with autism. *Behavior Modification, 32*, 548-555.
- Garrity, M. L., Luiselli, J. K., & McCollum, S. A. (2008). Effects of a supervisory intervention on assessment of interobserver agreement (IOA) by educational service providers. *Behavioral Interventions, 23*, 105-112.



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## NATIONAL STANDARDS PROJECT COMPLETE...

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and diagnostic groups. It will help parents, caregivers, educators, and service providers make informed treatment decisions.

The report also identifies limitations of current autism treatment research.

According to Dr. Wilczynski, researchers need to know which treatments have not yet been studied in depth so they can begin to scientifically examine these treatments. "Knowing which treatments do not have enough research support to determine their effectiveness will help scientists conduct more research in important areas that have been understudied," she said.

Visit [www.nationalautismcenter.org](http://www.nationalautismcenter.org) to access the *Findings and Conclusions* report and to learn more about the National Standards Project.

## More Research Needed

*By Susan M. Wilczynski, Ph.D., BCBA  
Executive Director, National Autism Center*

One of the most important findings of the National Standards Project is that many educational and behavioral treatments for school-aged children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) do not yet have adequate research to support their use. Many interventions have emerging evidence of their effectiveness, but more rigorous methods must be applied before we can be confident that they are truly effective.

Treatments that require additional investigation include academic interventions, auditory integration training, diets, facilitated communication, and sensory integration. The

research on these treatments is either poorly controlled or does not involve enough children with ASD.

Only 11 of 38 treatments we evaluated have strong evidence of effectiveness. Even among these treatments, more research is necessary to show the interventions are equally effective with children younger than 3 or older than 12, or with individuals with Asperger's Syndrome.

National Standards Project leaders encourage scientists to conduct more research. Parents, educators, and service providers need to know that well-controlled research shows that the treatments they are interested in using are effective.



## ABOUT MAY INSTITUTE

May Institute is a nonprofit organization that provides educational, rehabilitative, and behavioral healthcare services to individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities, brain injury, mental illness, and other behavioral healthcare needs. The Institute serves over 25,000 individuals and their families annually at more than 200 service locations in the Northeast, Southeast, and on the West Coast. An active center of research and training, May Institute maintains affiliations with more than 55 universities, hospitals, and human service agencies worldwide.

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