Reducing Physical Restraint of Students with Acquired Brain Injuries

Many children and adolescents who have acquired brain injury (ABI) exhibit extremely challenging behaviors such as aggression, self-injury, and property destruction. These behaviors can be dangerous, health threatening, and an impediment to education. Sometimes, physical intervention in the form of therapeutic restraint is required to maintain personal safety and eliminate risk.

At the May Center for Education and Neurorehabilitation in Brockton, Mass., several research projects have focused on antecedent assessment to better understand situations that may result in the necessity of restraining a student. As part of one research project, direct care staff were trained to document events and interactions that occurred before restraint was implemented. It was determined that certain instructional activities, such as making a transition or having a request denied, were antecedent conditions that preceded restraint use. Using this information, May staff members worked to change these conditions to reduce the likelihood that restraint would be required. For example, altering the manner in which transitions were announced and implemented was effective in reducing and eliminating physical intervention.

This type of “contextual analysis” is rare in the ABI literature and should provide a new perspective in understanding the “causes” of challenging behaviors and how to treat them successfully. The research is directed by Gary M. Pace, Ph.D., Erin K. Dunn, Ph.D., and James K. Luiselli, Ed.D. The initial report of findings will be published later this year in the journal, Brain Injury.

Collaborative Research Focuses on Readiness Skills

The May Center for Early Childhood Education in Arlington, Mass., has initiated a collaborative research project with PRAXIS, Inc., a group devoted to improving instructional technology with children who have developmental disabilities. Located in Cambridge, Mass., PRAXIS has designed computer-based teaching programs that foster early learning readiness skills such as matching pictures. These skills, in turn, lead to the acquisition of reading and communication abilities.
**Recent Publications of the May Institute**

**Collaborative Research... continued from front**
Research is implemented at the May Center under the supervision of PRAXIS field supervisors and center teachers. The research findings will be incorporated into the participating students’ educational programs and represents a meaningful demonstration of “research to practice” philosophy. For more information please contact Joseph N. Ricciardi, Psy.D., Clinical Director at The May Center for Early Childhood Education.

**Briefly Considered**
- James K. Luiselli, Ed.D., Vice President of Applied Research and Peer Review, presented a workshop on “Writing for Publication: A Primer for Clinicians and Practitioners” at the annual conference of the Berkshire Association for Behavior Analysis and Therapy (BABAT), held October 17-18, 2002 at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Mass. He discussed ways to improve writing for publication and communication of research findings.

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**The May Institute**
The May Institute is a private, nonprofit organization committed to providing the highest standard of behavioral healthcare, education, and rehabilitation services. Featured in the book “In Search of America’s Best Nonprofits,” (Jossey-Bass, 1997), The May Institute operates 170 programs nationwide, serving more than 18,000 individuals and families each year. An active center of research and training, we maintain affiliations with more than 40 universities, hospitals, and agencies worldwide, and has a Professional Advisory Board comprised of leading authorities in the field.

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**Alyssa Porter, Research Assistant for Praxis, Inc., conducts a research session with a student at the May Center for Early Childhood Education in Arlington, Mass.**