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.

Two children share toys at a May Institute school.

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.

Recent Publications


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 recommendations, 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 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).