Effects of Social Interventions on Vocational Outcomes of Adults with Autism: A Systematic Review
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PURPOSE

• To investigate and systematically review the existing literature concerning the outcomes of interventions containing a social component on post-secondary and vocational outcomes of adults with high functioning autism (HFA) as compared to the absence of such interventions.

BACKGROUND

• Combined statistics show the necessity for understanding the adult transition process for people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and the development of interventions to facilitate that process.
  - About 1 in 68 children is identified with ASD according to estimates from CDC's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network.
  - An estimated 50,000 youth with an ASD turn 18 years old each year in the United States (Shattuck et al., 2012).
• The complex social deficits seen in individuals with autism pose unique concerns for interactions with employers, post-secondary educators, and peers.

METHODS

• Systematic review timeline: Feb. to Apr., 2016
• Databases:
  - Academic Search Premier
  - CINAHL
  - ERIC
  - PsycInfo
• Inclusion Criteria:
  - Search terms
  - Peer-reviewed
• All articles considered for inclusion were double-reviewed:
  - After independent title and abstract review for inclusion/exclusion, two articles were determined to be relevant to the vocational outcomes aspect of the clinical question.
  - Three hand-searched items, found through the reference lists of systematically identified articles, were also assessed.

RESULTS

• A total of 5 articles met the inclusion criteria:
  - 1 randomized control trial (RCT)
  - 1 systematic review (SR)
  - 2 cohort retrospective designs (Cohort retro.)
  - 1 single-case experimental design (SCED)
• All 5 articles were focused on vocational outcomes, with no articles found discussing the effects of interventions with a social component on post-secondary education outcomes.
• Each article was appraised for quality using standardized checklists by two out of three graduate students, through random assignment. Raters agreed that each study was of lesser quality.
• We found no high quality RCTs that fit our inclusion criteria and addressed the outcomes of interest.

DISCUSSION

• There is a lack of high-quality literature examining the effect of interventions with a social component on post-secondary education and vocational outcomes for transition-aged adults with ASD.
• Project SEARCH shows promising preliminary results regarding interventions leading to successful outcomes for young adults with HFA.
• Future directions:
  - RCT should be conducted to assess the outcomes of specific interventions.
  - More social intervention comparison research is needed to provide multiple options for young adults with ASD as they approach transition.
  - More research addressing post-secondary education outcomes is also needed; currently no studies were identified in this systematic review.

REFERENCES


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