

Early ASD intervention promotes academic achievement

Rigorous screening for learning difficulties is required for adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), as a significant minority of affected individuals with average cognitive skills show academic delays, according to a new study. The longitudinal study examined early predictors of and changes in academic achievement and class placement in children who had been referred for ASD early in infancy (age 2).

The data showed that academic skills varied widely at ages 9 and 18 years, but in general were in-line with or higher than expected based on their cognitive ability. However, a proportion of children with ASD experienced delayed achievement by age 9 (22%) and age 18 (32%) years, despite exhibiting average or above average cognitive skills. Children who stayed in general or inclusive education showed higher academic achievement (in terms of IQ scores) at ages 9 and 18 years, compared to those who moved to special education classrooms. Importantly, early cognitive ability and parent-mediated intervention as early as age 3 years could predict long-term academic outcomes at ages 9 and 18 years. As such, the researchers conclude that very early interventions that target cognitive skills and parent participation may help later academic development.

Hyun Kim, S., Bal, V.H. & Lord, C. (2018), Longitudinal follow-up of academic achievement in children with autism from age 2 to 18. J Child Psychol Psychiatr, 59:258-267
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