Therapies for children with autism spectrum disorders.

Record Status
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Citation

Authors' objectives
The Vanderbilt Evidence-based Practice Center systematically reviewed evidence on therapies for children ages 2 to 12 with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). We focused on treatment outcomes, modifiers of treatment effectiveness, evidence for generalization of outcomes to other contexts, and evidence to support treatment decisions in children ages 0-2 at risk for an ASD diagnosis.

Authors' conclusions
Medical interventions including risperidone and aripiprazole show benefit for reducing challenging behaviors in some children with ASDs, but side effects are significant. Some behavioral and educational interventions that vary widely in terms of scope, target, and intensity have demonstrated effects, but the lack of consistent data limits our understanding of whether these interventions are linked to specific clinically meaningful changes in functioning. The needs for continuing improvements in methodologic rigor in the field and for larger multisite studies of existing interventions are substantial. Better characterization of children in these studies to target treatment plans is imperative.

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