

Monkey see, Monkey do! Utilization of yoga intervention for a child with non-verbal Autism

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BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by difficulties with social skills, repetitive behaviors, communication and motor planning. According to the CDC, 1 in 68 children have been identified as having ASD. Therapy services are required to address physical, language and social skills. Along with the cardiovascular benefits, physical activity has been shown to improve socialization, visual attention and decrease the frequency of self-stimulating behaviors in children with ASD. Yoga offers structured and predictable patterns which can support the learning needs of children with ASD.

The purpose of this case report is to describe the effects of yoga intervention with traditional physical therapy on motor performance and visual attention in a young girl with non-verbal ASD.

CASE DESCRIPTION

6 year old female with Autism spectrum disorder

Motoric Challenges

- Dyspraxia
- Decreased coordination
 - Mild Hypotonia
 - Decreased age equivalent scores on Peabody Developmental Motor Scale (PDMS-2)

Cognitive/Communication /Social challenges

- Decreased attention to task
- Intermittent eye contact
- Limited sign language

Sensory Processing/integration challenges

- Sensory seeking

Received PT, OT, SLP, and aquatic therapy

INTERVENTION



Yoga poses

Balance

Visual Attention

Gross Motor Activities

Coordination

Strengthening

RESULTS

- Increased visual attention
- Improved spontaneous eye contact
- Improved functional balance

	Initial Evaluation Age: 2 yrs 7 mo		Re-Assessment Age: 5 yrs 8 mo		Final Assessment Age: 6 yrs 9 mo*	
	Raw score	Age equivalent	Raw score	Age equivalent	Raw score	Age equivalent
PDMS-2 subtest						
Stationary	38	18 months	42	35 months	49	48 months
Locomotion	100	22 months	149	45 months	158	49 months
Object Manipulation	15	12 months	29	34 months	31	37 months

* Although the PDMS-2 is validated for the population up to 6 years old, it was used due to the patient's inability to complete the Bruiniks-Oseretsky Test for Motor Proficiency.

CLINICAL RELEVANCE

The outcome of this case report supports yoga as a feasible intervention for the pediatric autism population. Yoga has been shown to increase flexibility, strength, balance and coordination which are common impairments in children on the Autism spectrum. Along with the physical benefits, the addition of yoga poses to traditional therapy had positive effects on social interaction and communication. Utilizing yoga as an intervention may give further opportunity to working in a group setting which may enhance social skills while providing an economic alternative in physical therapy care.

REFERENCES

