Improved Care for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: The Impact of Collaborative Partnerships

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INTRODUCTION

Non-verbal children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) present unique challenges to the clinical team. Self-injurious behavior (SIB) is a major treatment focus for children with ASD. 50% of children with ASD engage in SIB (Minshawi et al., 2014). SIB can result in over-medication, tissue damage, serious injuries as well as limit social and educational progress. Health problems, which may contribute to SIB, can be missed due to the inability to self-report. The first sign of physical illness may be behavioral changes. This case example highlights how advanced practice nurses, in collaboration with behavior analysts, can improve access to effective treatment while reducing pain and suffering. Applied behavior analysis (ABA) provides objective data of behavioral indicators which may be associated with pain and discomfort. The use of ABA in collaboration with Doctoral prepared nurses in treating individuals with impaired communication can improve care.

METHOD

13 year-old non-verbal male with ASD and severe self-injurious behavior living in residential treatment facility

Collaboration using evidenced based practice: ABA

Behavioral data used to inform clinical decision making

Dependent Variables and Data Analysis

Non-verbal pain communication

Inability to self-report prevents symptom recognition and timely diagnosis

Increased Communication Across Disciplines

Frequent discussions regarding behavioral and medical indicators may improve treatment and diagnosis of medical factors affecting behaviors.

Medical and Behavioral Observations

SIB as an indicator of underlying constipation

Observational Design

Behavioral data

Collaborative Partnerships

Enhanced care for children with autism spectrum disorder

DISCUSSION

Collaboration between APNs and BCBA

Improved quality of healthcare, decreased rates of dangerous behavior, increased overall quality of life

Reduced SIB, fewer injuries, student can attend school, less physical holds

ABA can be used for many different clinical situations

ABA informs clinical decision making, provides data needed for medication management and symptom assessment

Expedite access to effective treatment

REFERENCES