The Relationship between Socioeconomic Status and Use of Interventions in Families of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Results from the Feasibility and Main Study Phases of ABC-CT

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Introduction

Prior research indicates significantly reduced utilization of autism-related services in families with lower socioeconomic status (SES) (Liptak et al., 2008). Higher levels of parental education are associated with use of a greater number of services (Patten et al., 2012). Parents with higher SES are more likely to enroll their children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in evidence-based practices (EBP) (Irvin et al., 2012). This project will investigate the relations between SES and use of interventions from data collected from the ABC-CT project, a multi-site study conducted at five sites across the United States, that aims to measure biomarkers associated with ASD.

Objective

- Examine the relations between SES, total number of hours of services received, total hours of evidence-based practices (EBP) received, and total hours of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) received.
- Explore the relations between SES and types of intervention used by families of children with ASD (EBP or CAM).

Method

Participants: 176 children (143 males) between 4-11 years old (M= 8 years, 6 months, SD = 1.7. Mean IQ = 95.8, SD = 18.8) participated in the feasibility or main phase of ABC-CT (to date). All participants met criteria for ASD, based on the Autism Diagnostic Observation Scheduled 2 (ADOS-2), Autism Diagnostic Interview-Revised (ADI-R), and Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-5 (DSM-5).

Procedure:
- Socioeconomic variables (i.e. parental education level and annual household income) were collected from a demographics form completed by parents and/or caregivers.
- Intervention history was collected via parent clinician interview or questionnaire format; information regarding types of intervention received (e.g. speech and language therapy, equine therapy) and the total number of hours of intervention received in the previous six weeks was collected.
- Services described in the intervention list were categorized as EBP or CAM (Wong et al., 2015, CDC, 2015).

Method

Maternal Education Level

- Paternal education level related to total hours of CAM received (p = 0.04)

Socioeconomic status related to hours of interventions received

- Poisson regressions indicate annual household income is related to hours of EBP received (p = 0.001), and hours of CAM received (p = 0.001)

Results

Socioeconomic status was not significantly related to the type of intervention received

- Pearson’s Chi-squared indicated parental education level and household income were not related to type of intervention received (EBP or CAM)

Discussion

- These findings demonstrate relations between SES and the total number of hours of interventions received, and hours of EBP received, and hours of CAM received.
- Overall, these results do not indicate relations between SES and type of intervention received (EBP or CAM).
- Future studies should further investigate relations between SES and the amount and type of interventions received, in order to develop a better understanding of how parental education level and household income may impact use of autism-related interventions.

References


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