

M4A- Music therapy versus play therapy for autistic children

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The Music for Autism (M4A) trial evaluates the neurobehavioral outcomes of a music therapy (MT) intervention, compared to a matched play therapy (PT) intervention, on social communication, brain structure and connectivity. In a crossover randomised controlled trial (RCT), 80 children with autism across all levels of functioning, aged 6-12 years, undergo a baseline assessment and are then randomly allocated to a sequence of interventions (MT-PT or PT-MT). Assessments are taken before and after each intervention period. Both interventions consist of 12 weekly, 45 minute, one-on-one sessions conducted in the same setting by a licensed music therapist, in accordance with a set of intervention guidelines. The development of intervention guidelines was a vital initial step needed to ensure all therapists deliver each intervention as it was designed and with minimal variations, while at the same time allowing for flexibility in the therapists' approach to each individual child. Common themes, goals and a basic structure were established for both MT and PT so that the main difference between them is whether music was a central component, or it was conspicuously not used at all. Both interventions are guided by common themes (e.g., fostering self-expression), common goals targeted through a range of activities (e.g., sensorimotor integration, communication, emotion regulation), and the same structure (i.e., four activities per session selected using a visual schedule). In sum, the intervention guidelines serve to delineate common themes, goals, and a shared structure and at the same time allow room for flexibility in the therapists' approach.

Referanser

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