

## **Early Parent Led Intervention for Children on The Autism Spectrum**

In October 2016, the Lancet published the results of a research study into the use of parent led early intervention, the research carried out jointly by Kings College London, the University of Manchester, and Newcastle University.

The type of early intervention used in this study, focuses specifically on working with parents. The researchers found, that, children who had received the intervention aged 2-4, had less severe overall symptoms six years later, with improved social communication, and reduced repetitive behaviours. The lead researchers suggested, that sustained changes in autism symptoms are possible after early intervention, something that has previously been regarded as difficult to achieve. This type of early intervention is distinctive, in being designed to work with parents to help improve parent-child communication at home.

The publication in The Lancet DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(16)31229-6, Pickles et al (2016), of the results of this research study, is the vindication of the work of Dr Carl Delacato, working with autistic children in many parts of the world, from the 1960's, based upon his previous work carried out by the Philadelphia group led by Dr. Temple Fay, from the 1950's.

His philosophy was precisely the same methodology of parent led intervention, rather than being direct therapist led intervention.

Similar to the outcomes of the research work, published in the Lancet, the therapy practised, by the Philadelphia group was parent led, the parents being coached and over viewed by trainers.

The work of Delacato et al, was subjected to extensive vilification, led principally by the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP), who repeatedly published for many years, their condemnation of the parent led early intervention therapy.

The AAP continued up until the turn of century into the early 2000's to republish its official stance in the matter.

With hindsight, the reaction of the AAP to the acclaim heaped upon the Philadelphia Team led by Temple Fay, was inevitable, however the level of the criticism by the AAP and the lengths that they went to ensure the criticism was maintained was a serious misjudgement.

A major plank in the criticism of the work, was the claims of lack of accredited research into the methodology of the intervention techniques . Terminology such as "no peer reviewed, controlled, double blinded trials, placebo effect" being extensively quoted to discredit the work.

However, in 2004, Professor Janet Eyre, published a paper entitled "Restoring Neurological Function", in the Annals of Neurology, 42, 283-291, for the Academy of Medical Sciences, in which she expressed the view that, the fact that trials do not exist, should not preclude the use of alternative solutions, if they are found to have a positive effect. Professor Eyre goes on to say, "Part of the problem is that many of those therapies are based on uncontrolled clinical observations of their effects. That does not mean they should be discarded".

The publication in The Lancet, of the results of the parent led early intervention studies, only serve to reinforce the validity of the therapies developed by the Temple Fay led Philadelphia team, modified in the 1970's by Carl Delacato, practised today in many parts of the world.

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