Title: Trends in Psychotropic Medication Use following Outpatient Behavioral Assessments

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Introduction: The use of parent training to address challenging behaviors of children with developmental disabilities (DD) has been found to be an effective treatment approach (Bearss et al., 2016). Parents are often taught to identify the function of or associated antecedents and consequences of behavior (Scahill et al., 2016). One method used to identify behavior function is a functional analysis which involves manipulating the environment in order to find the function of a challenging behavior. Treatment recommendations are then made based upon assessment outcomes. The purpose of this study was to evaluate what happened to children’s medication status after challenging behavior was assessed using functional analysis methodology and parents were trained on interventions to address behavior function.

Method: Forty-seven patients between the ages of 2-16 years were referred for behavioral assessments. Patients were referred by Dr. Noble to the Behavior Clinic. We first have the guardian’s complete indirect assessments to get a better idea of the challenging behaviors. The functional analyses are then completed with the parents as the therapists running the contingencies in the exam room. The parents also complete the treatment conditions with the guidance of Dr. Valdovinos and Janelle Peck. Parent training is then completed in which, recommendations are discussed and training is provided. A file review of the patients was conducted to determine what changes in medication status children might have experienced after their clinical evaluation. Patients medications were categorized into eight groups: taking medication to taking no medication, taking no medication to taking no medication, taking no medication to taking medication, switching medications for the same purpose, taking the same exact medication with the same dosage, adding of different medications, taking more of the same medication, and taking less of the same medication.

Results: Thirty-four of the forty-seven patients completed the treatment condition along with the functional analyses. With that we found a 69% reduction decrease in behavior problems from baseline to treatment. With the medication groups: 41% of the patients had no changes in medication, 45% of the patients were on new medication or had a greater number of medications/dose of medication, and 15% of the patients had decreases or discontinuation of medication. For no changes in medication, 41% of the patients fell into this group. Some of the patients could fit into more than one group and with that the percentages do not add up to one hundred percent.

Discussion: We found interesting trends regarding medication use following clinic appointments at the Behavior Clinic. More research is necessary to explain what these mean and what accounts for them.

References/Citations: