

What's the Evidence?

TEACCH for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder

Key findings

- TEACCH stands for the Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication related handicapped Children. The programme primarily involves structured teaching within an educational environment where activities are made clearer and easier to perform.
- There remains an uncertainty whether TEACCH improves the development of children with ASD when compared with other intervention programmes and mainstream education.

PLEASE NOTE: This summary was produced more than 4 years ago. Information provided may be out of date. If you think it would be helpful to update this summary please contact us at pencru@exeter.ac.uk

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What were we asked?

We were asked whether TEACCH is an effective treatment for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

What did we do?

We searched the Cochrane Library, TRIP database, NHS evidence and also reviewed guidance issued by the UK Department for Education.

What did we find?

TEACCH stands for the Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication related handicapped Children. The programme primarily involves structured

teaching within an educational environment where activities are made clearer and easier to perform. TEACCH often involves the use of visual aids and the arrangement of a teaching environment to support individual learning^{1,2}. More information about the TEACCH programme is available from [this link](#).

We identified a systematic review of 'Therapies for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder' carried out by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) which is an American government agency.

The AHRQ reviewed evidence of the effectiveness of interventions, including TEACCH, to improve the development of

children with ASD. The review showed that there have been four trials about TEACCH, but only one of these was considered to be of good quality due to the inclusion of a control group. This Italian trial included children aged between 8 and 10 and compared efforts of TEACCH in a residential center, a specific school setting and a comparison group from a mainstream school. In each group there was between 10 and 13 children present. The study concluded that:

'Both TEACCH groups showed significant improvement on adaptive measures, but the mainstream classroom group did not. The mainstream group improved significantly on the Psycho Educational Profile perception measure only; both TEACCH groups demonstrated cognitive improvements on the Psycho Educational Profile on a variety of additional subscales³.'

The full report from AHRQ the systematic review can be found by following [this link](#).

What do we think?

There are very few rigorous studies that have evaluated the TEACCH programme. Larger controlled studies are warranted. These would compare children's long, medium and short term development in a TEACCH programme compared to other programmes. Those measuring the key outcomes should not know what intervention the child received (i.e. be blinded). A comprehensive comparative study from the UK is needed at this present time as there have been none thus far. The TEACCH programme is used widely in schools across the UK. At this moment in time there is some limited evidence, from the one trial big enough to make the results convincing, that TEACCH may be effective. There remains an uncertainty whether TEACCH improves the development of children with ASD when compared with other intervention programmes and mainstream education.

We would like to hear your feedback on this summary – please email us at pen cru@exeter.ac.uk if you have any comments or questions.

References

1. Jordan, R., et al. (1998). *Educational Interventions for Children*. Department of Education. 77 (1): 81-89.
2. Burrows, K. (2004). Early intervention for children with autism. *Paediatr Child Health*. 9 (4). [Online] Available at: <http://www.drbehrmann.com/EI.pdf>
3. Warren, Z., et al. (2011). Therapies for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Effective Health Care Programme. Comparative Effectiveness Review. [Online] Available at: http://www.effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/ehc/products/106/656/CER26_Autism_Report_04-14-2011.pdf

Note: the views expressed here are those of the Peninsula Cerebra Research Unit (PenCRU) at the University of Exeter Medical School and do not represent the views of the Cerebra charity, or any other parties mentioned. We strongly recommend seeking medical advice before undertaking any treatments/therapies not prescribed within the NHS.