

Recent media-hype concerning “Some children with autism diagnosis can recover”

Written by

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A research paper was recently published in the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* by autism researcher, Deborah Fein, entitled “Optimal Outcomes”. The heading of the relevant article is “Some with autism diagnosis can recover”.

This article has understandably caused quite a lot of heated conversation, so we (Autism Speaks) are forwarding you some of the “take home messages” for parents and professionals that Dr Fein most kindly provided for distribution.

Below is a summary of some of her key points:

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- Individuals with autism have a wide range of outcomes - anywhere from significant disability to indistinguishable symptoms from typically developing children. This latter outcome is not common.
- Most of the children that reach an “optimal outcome” had some form of intensive early intervention.
- Common denominators of intensive early intervention are the behavior component and intensity of intervention; essentially, the "more the better, and the earlier the better."
- The study reinforces the importance of identifying autism early and getting children into autistic-specific intervention as quickly as possible.
- The neurological mechanism associated with autism is still not completely understood.
- Dyslexia may be a good model to look at insofar as it represents a clear deficit, something that can be measured, and past research (e.g. fMRI studies) has demonstrated that behavioral interventions for dyslexia result in compensation and near normalisation of brain function
- In autism, a recent study by Dawson et al (2012) demonstrated that early behavioral intervention is associated with normalised brain activity, as measured by EEG, in young children with autism.

These sites were also provided by Autism Speaks:

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/science/science-news/study-confirms-%E2%80%9Coptimal-outcomes%E2%80%9D>

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/17/health/some-with-autism-diagnosis-can-recover-study-finds.html?_r=0

<http://www.webmd.com/brain/autism/news/20130115/autism-recovery-possible>

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/science/science-news/study-confirms-%E2%80%9Coptimal-outcomes%E2%80%9D>

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/17/health/some-with-autism-diagnosis-can-recover-study-finds.html?_r=0

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-20252593>

<http://www.webmd.com/brain/autism/news/20130115/autism-recovery-possible>