

From Recruitment to Results: Advances and Roadblocks in Parent-Mediated Intervention Research

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Supporting parent-child interactions is a common goal across early intervention programs for infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities. Critical to this goal are effective and feasible parent-mediated intervention approaches. Child outcomes of parent-mediated interventions depend largely on the instructional methods used to teach parents and also on the parents' implementation of specific communication support strategies. As such, designing methodologically rigorous studies that are also feasible to implement in everyday settings poses some unique challenges. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the methods and results of three parent-mediated intervention studies spanning three different populations of children with communication disorders (autism, hearing loss, developmental language disorder). First, I will present a general overview of each study's methods and results, including a discussion of moderators and mediators of intervention outcomes. Understanding child and parent moderators of intervention outcomes is critical to understanding for whom an intervention has the greatest effects. Furthermore, examining the unique effects of different communication support strategies on child outcomes is critical to understanding the relative effects of different intervention components. Second, I will discuss methodological considerations related to the balance between strong internal and external validity. I will describe specific methods used to improve rigor, reproducibility, and transparency of study procedures. I will also discuss how clinical trial reporting guidelines are changing with respect to the documentation and reporting of adverse events and protocol deviations. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion related to future methodological considerations for language intervention research.