

OUTCOMES OF A PILOT TRAINING PROGRAM IN A QIGONG MASSAGE
INTERVENTION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Abstract

Sensory impairment is a common and significant feature of children on the autism spectrum. In 2005, a qigong massage intervention based on Chinese Medicine, and delivered by a physician trained in Chinese medicine, was shown to provide short-term improvement of sensory impairment and adaptive behavior in a randomized control study with a small sample of young children with autism. The intervention was two-pronged, involving both direct treatment of the child as well as parent training in a follow-through massage. In 2006, the methodology was adapted, and the Qigong Sensory Training (QST) program was developed with the aim of providing Western-trained occupational therapists and early intervention specialists sufficient theory and skills in Chinese Medicine and qigong massage to achieve proficiency in providing the intervention. This article describes the preliminary evaluation of the Qigong Sensory Training (QST) program as piloted with 15 professionals, 26 children and outcome testing using standardized tests of sensory impairment and adaptive behavior. Results of outcomes comparing delivery by QST trained therapists with delivery by a physician trained in Chinese Medicine showed that both groups receiving the intervention improved, and there was no difference in outcome between the two groups. A description of the intervention and training program is provided. Implications for further research are discussed.

Data tables:

Pre to post gains on measures of adaptive behavior and sensory impairment. Children treated by trained interventionists.

Variable	Pre-assessment (N = 26)		Post-Assessment (N = 26)		Wilcoxon Z statistics	Sig. p-value
	M	SD	M	SD		
Vineland Composite	68.6	12.2	77.7	14.5	3.93	<.000
Vineland Communication Domain	68.5	15.0	77.6	16.9	3.62	<.000
Vineland Daily Living Skills Domain	73.3	18.5	82.7	17.8	3.01	.003
Vineland Socialization Domain	70.9	13.0	79.8	13.9	2.99	.003
Vineland Motor Skills Domain	73.5	12.0	81.0	11.4	3.00	.003
Sensory Profile Total	21.0	11.8	14.5	10.7	-3.59	<.000
Sensory Processing	6.2	3.7	4.1	3.4	-3.16	.002
Sensory Modulation	4.6	3.3	3.2	2.7	-3.01	.003
Sensory Behavioral Response	3.4	1.9	2.8	1.6	-1.69	ns
Autism Behavior Checklist	66.0	25.1	41.9	22.1	-4.08	<.000

Table 3.

Difference and equivalence of mean gain scores for Chinese medicine trained physician and trained therapist interventions.

Variable	Chinese Medicine Trained Physician (N=13)		Trained Therapists (N=26)		Effect Size	t-test p- value	CI Within Tolerance
	M	SD	M	SD			
Vineland Composite*	6.23	8.96	9.08	9.84	0.302	.387	No
Vineland Communication	3.15	9.67	9.04	10.06	0.597	.089	No
Vineland Daily Living Skills	8.23	10.69	9.38	13.89	0.093	.794	No
Vineland Socialization	9.15	12.15	8.88	13.27	-0.021	.951	No
Vineland Motor Skills	7.25	12.95	7.50	10.79	-0.021	.951	No
Sensory Profile Total**	-8.46	9.85	-6.73	7.02	-0.202	.531	No
Sensory Processing	-2.38	2.69	-2.15	2.84	-0.083	.809	No
Sensory Modulation	-1.92	3.20	-1.38	2.12	-0.198	.533	No
Sensory Behavioral Response	-1.08	1.55	-0.62	1.96	-0.261	.465	No
Autism Behavior Checklist**	-13.31	24.08	-24.12	15.77	0.531	.100	No

* An increase from pre to post represents a positive change on these measures.

** A decrease from pre to post represents a positive change on these measures.

