

iPad App complements ASD therapy

Summarised by Dr. Jessica K Edwards

Children with autism spectrum condition (ASC) may benefit from combined technology-based and traditional interventions, according to new research. Andrew Whitehouse and colleagues assessed the efficacy of TOBY (Therapy Outcomes By You) in a randomised controlled trial (ACTRN12614000738628). This is an iPad application to help children and carers structure home-based therapy. The trial included 80 children within 12 months of an ASC diagnosis, who were assigned their usual therapy or usual therapy plus TOBY. Significant improvements were identified at 6-months follow up for secondary outcomes (visual reception and fine motor skills, and single-word comprehension) but not for primary outcomes (Autism Treatment Evaluation Checklist). Although those assigned to use TOBY did not effectively sustain its use after the first 3 months of the trial, 70% of carers reported that TOBY was “a helpful therapy planning tool”. The overall exposure to therapy per child increased, as a result of using TOBY, with minor cost implications.

*Whitehouse, A. J. O., Granich, J., Alvares, G., Busacca, M., Cooper, M. N., Dass, A., Duong, T., Harper, R., Marshall, W., Richdale, A., Rodwell, T., Trembath, D., Vellanki, P., Moore, D. W. & Anderson, A. (2017), A randomised controlled trial of an iPad-based application to complement early behavioural intervention in Autism Spectrum Disorder. *J Child Psychol Psychiatr*, 58:1042-1052. doi:10.1111/jcpp.12752*