Westfield State University
Graduate Research in Applied Behavior Analysis

Problematic Avoidance of Hygiene and Health Care Activities Among Children With Developmental Disabilities and/or Autism

Study #1: Parent / Caregiver Survey on the Prevalence and Significance of Avoidance during Hygiene, Medical and Dental Activities Among Children with Developmental Disabilities and/or Autism

Status: Seeking Survey Participants, Win a gift card!
All parents of children with developmental disabilities and/or Autism

Kelley St. Clair, a graduate student at Westfield State University’s Applied Behavior Analysis Program is researching how children with developmental disabilities and/or Autism respond to common hygiene, medical and dental care activities. Some children with DD and Autism have difficulties tolerating these activities including haircuts, toothbrushing, finger nail trimming, ear exams, blood draws, dental cleanings, etc. This research investigates the prevalence of these difficulties and how this impacts the children and their families.

We need responses from parents whose children who do and do not have difficulties with these activities in order to get a representative sample.

All survey responses are anonymous. No identifying information about you or your child will be collected or available to the researcher.

Survey participants can enter to win one of two $50 gift cards to Target and amazon.com by emailing their name and address to the researcher at abaresearch@westfield.ma.edu or (413) 572-8353. Your contact information will never be shared.

Study #2: Systematic desensitization for avoidance and escape from needles and other medical, dental and hygiene activities

To learn more, contact us:
(413) 572-8353
abaresearch@westfield.ma.edu

Take the parent survey:
Click here for survey

Parents of children with developmental disabilities and/or Autism can enter to win one of two $50 gift cards to Target and amazon.com.
Status: Seeking Research Participants
Children with Developmental Disabilities and/or Autism Who Have Significant Difficulties Tolerating Common Hygiene & Health Care Activities

Kelley St. Clair, a graduate student at Westfield State University’s Applied Behavior Analysis Program is researching a behavioral intervention to reduce problematic escape, avoidance, and distress in response to common hygiene (e.g. haircuts, nail trimming, etc.) and health care (e.g. medical exams, blood draws, etc.) activities among children with developmental disabilities and/or Autism Spectrum Disorders.

This gentle, child-paced intervention uses systematic desensitization (gradually increasing exposure to feared objects or settings), positive reinforcement, functional communication, and monitoring of non-invasive physiologic measures (such as heart rate). Variations of this method are considered well-established in the research literature. The goal will be to help your child make progress while remaining calm and relaxed at all times.

Potential Benefits to Participants:
- Increased relaxation and physical cooperation with hygiene and/or health care activities
- Reduced need for restraint or sedation to accomplish these activities

Potential Risks to Participants:
- Distress and physical avoidance during targeted activities (however the purpose of the research is to reduce and eliminate these risks)

Eligible Participants
- Children 2 through 17-years-old,
- Diagnosed with a developmental disability and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder,
- Consistently display severe avoidance or distress during hygiene or health care tasks which has resulted in:
  - Caregivers completely avoiding these activities,
  - Restraining the child to complete these activities, and/or
  - Performing the activities while the child is sleeping or medically sedated.

Activities may include haircuts, trimming finger or toe nails, toothbrushing, components of medical exams (such as looking in ears, taking temperature), blood draws, immunizations, dental exams, etc.

- Must live or attend school or daycare within 30 minutes of the Springfield/Holyoke Massachusetts area AND be available to receive multiple brief treatment sessions at that location between 9am and 2pm during February and May, 2012. Researchers are happy to collaborate with school districts on conveniently incorporating treatment sessions into special education programming to support children’s overall health and behavioral functioning.

We are recruiting a very small number of participants, spots will fill quickly

To learn more, please contact Kelley St. Clair at (413) 572-8353 or abaresearch@westfield.ma.edu