Treatment of Sensory Difficulties among Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders through Sensory Integration Approaches and Sensory-Based Intervention and their Impact on Function - A Current Review

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Children with ASD often experience difficulties in sensory integration and modulation that affect their quality of life and their participation in daily activities. These children are often referred to occupational therapy for intervention targeting their sensory difficulties. The most common interventions are Ayres’ sensory integration (SI) and sensory-based intervention (SBI). The broad use of these interventions raises the question whether there is a sufficient evidence-base as to their efficacy. This article reviews research carried out over the last two decades that examined the treatment effect of these interventions on the behavior, performance and participation of children with ASD that exhibit sensory difficulties. While this literature review found adequate evidence in the research that supports the use of SI intervention, despite some methodological limitations, there is not enough support for the use of SBI-based treatments. There is some support for SBI-based treatment such as, massage and vestibular stimulation, but further research is required for most SBI interventions to establish their efficacy. The article includes a discussion section of the literature review findings and provides some practical suggestions and recommendations for the use of these interventions in the school system and in the clinic.