Recent Findings from An Individualized Mental Health Intervention for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (AIM HI): Spotlight on Caregiver-Teacher Concordance of Child Challenging Behaviors

Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) receive care in multiple service settings and frequently present with challenging behaviors in these settings. Understanding how key informants, like caregivers and teachers, rate challenging behaviors can inform appropriately tailored treatment for children with ASD.

**QUESTION:** How concordant are caregiver and teacher ratings of challenging behaviors in children with ASD?

**PROJECT AIMS:**
1. Examine concordance between caregiver and teacher ratings of challenging behaviors in a sample of school-aged children with ASD and
2. Identify child clinical characteristics associated with informant concordance.

**PARTICIPANTS:**
141 children with ASD and their primary caregiver and teacher. Children were drawn from outpatient or school-based mental health services. 
- Age = 9.07 years
- 84% boys, 56% Hispanic/Latino

**DATA COLLECTED**
- Data extracted from baseline assessments of a randomized community effectiveness trial of AIM HI (Brookman Frazier & Drabotka, 2010)
- Caregivers and teachers provided ratings on child challenging behaviors
- Child clinical characteristics that were measured included educational placement, ASD severity, and psychiatric comorbidity

**OUTCOMES**
- Caregiver-teacher concordance was moderately low. Specifically there was less agreement in caregiver and teacher ratings as children met criteria for more mental health diagnoses particularly for externalizing disorders.

**IMPLICATIONS**
Caregivers and teachers had the worst agreement in ratings of child challenging behaviors for children with greater complexity of clinical symptoms. Findings highlight the clinical and pragmatic significance of obtaining reports from multiple informants, particularly to inform treatment planning decisions (settings and providers) needed in mental health treatment delivery. Mental health therapists must synthesize data from multiple informants including caregivers and other providers to prioritize the structure content, and selection of treatment targets. This study underscores the importance of attending to the child’s non-ASD mental health diagnoses and the impact they may have on the child’s behavior problems.

**FULL REFERENCE**

NIMH Grant RO1MH096317 (PI, Brookman-Frazee)

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