Nutrition in Children with Autism

Abstract: Introduction and objective: Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are a set of neurodevelopmental conditions characterized by social and communication deficits and repetitive and restrictive behaviors. ASD is one of the highest incident and most debilitating of the childhood disorders. A set of problem behaviors related to ASD are restricted food intake and ritualized eating. Feeding problems of children with ASD are frequent and can have serious consequences. The objective of this article is Nutrition in Children with Autism.

Methods: Science Direct, Pubmed, Cochrane, CINAHL, Embase, scopus, (1990 through 2013) were searched for English-language studies using a list of keywords. The books about medicine and speech therapy and psychology were studied too.

Results: The common physical symptoms of children with autism often include diarrhea, constipation, bloating and GI pain, frequent infections, sleeping challenges and inflammation/pain. For many, food intolerances, imbalanced biochemistry and digestive problems are at the core of these symptoms. These weaknesses in physiological functioning can be directly tied to biochemical processes that are affected by diet—the absence of requisite nutrients and/or the presence of offending substances. For many children, altering food choices and adding supplementation affects these processes, promotes healing and can improve autism symptoms. The bodies of children with autism are unique and require specific care, including enzymes for digestion, medical treatment for yeast infections, attention to digestive issues, special dietary requirements, nutrient and fatty acid supplementation, behavioral therapy and more. Gluten, casein, soy, corn and eggs are common offenders. The exact foods to remove will depend on the individual; however, gluten- and casein-free diets are among the most popular and effective.

Conclusion: Sugar and refined oils also contribute to inflammation. Removing the offending foods that contribute to inflammation, trigger immune response (food sensitivities) and increase toxicity, and adding foods and supplements that support a healthy ecosystem and provide needed nutrients can ease symptoms. In this review, the benefits of autism-specific diets and why they should be considered when implementing the treatment plan for ASD are discussed.

ASD, Gluten, Sugar, casein.

Presentation: Poster