Study Summary

How a shortened version of a questionnaire performs in measuring behaviors related to autism and social communication

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Who sponsored this study?

This research was supported by the Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes (ECHO) program, Office of The Director, National Institutes of Health.

Why was this study needed?

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a condition defined by challenges in social communication. Social communication refers to how we use language or words in social interactions with others, including how we may change words we use in different situations and with different people. This study wanted to see if a shorter version of a social communication questionnaire could predict ASD and other challenges related to social communication as correctly as a longer version. Having a shorter survey would mean that it would take participants less time to complete it. This study could also help identify questionnaires that could be used to find different social communication challenges in people with and without ASD.

Who was involved?

More than 3,000 people completed questionnaires for this study, including almost 200 parents who had a child with ASD between the age of 2-18. Participants were from research studies from across the United States.

What happened during the study?

Researchers used questionnaires from 10 different research projects in the United States to compare how well information from the shorter version predicted ASD diagnosis and measured broader behaviors in people without ASD diagnosis.

What were the study results?

The researchers found that the short questionnaire did a good job predicting autism diagnosis and measuring social communication behaviors. However, more research is needed to see how the short questionnaire compares in other ways to the long questionnaire.

Footnote: Results reported here are for a single study. Other or future studies may provide new information or different results. You should not make changes to your health without first consulting your healthcare professional.
Impact

This study suggests that the shorter version of the questionnaire is quicker, easier for participants to complete, and produces the same quality of work as the longer version. This work is also important because it may be helpful for people who do not meet the definition of ASD, but still face challenges in social communication and could benefit from help.

What happens next?

We now know that the shorter version of the questionnaire is comparable to the longer version, in terms of measuring these behaviors and predicting ASD diagnosis. However, more work is needed to confirm that the short questionnaire performs in all the same ways that the longer one does, since the study addressed only a few of these questions.

Note: This study is part of a project examining how different versions of this questionnaire measure ASD and broader, related social communication traits.

Where can I learn more?

More information on the questionnaire used in this study can be found through the publisher website and additional information on the shortened questionnaire can be found on PubMed.

Access the full journal article, titled “Distributional Properties and Criterion Validity of a Shortened Version of the Social Responsiveness Scale: Results from the ECHO Program and Implications for Social Communication Research.”

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