

Get Involved - Research Projects

Self-injurious behaviour in non-verbal children

Background

Self-injurious behaviour in non-verbal children, such as head banging, face slapping and self-biting, interferes with learning and social interactions and increases the likelihood of hospital treatment, placement breakdown and carer stress. It can begin as early as 12 months of age, persists over many years in around 80% of cases and is often resistant to treatment once established. This indicates that early intervention is warranted. In order to design an early intervention strategy, a valid and reliable assessment protocol that addresses well-documented causes of self-injurious behaviour is essential. We have developed an assessment protocol that requires further evaluation to determine its efficacy at differentiating between the most likely causes of SIB, which include operant learning and pain arising from untreated health conditions, for which well established medical and behavioural interventions already exist.

Aims

- To learn more about the underlying causes of self-injury in non-verbal children which will hopefully lead to more effective interventions, assessment or prevention.
- To evaluate the effects of treatment of a health condition on self-injury.

Method

Participants will receive a behavioural assessment of their self-injurious behaviour, a home-based sleep and behaviour assessment and a physical and dental health assessment.

The behavioural assessment will include interviews, questionnaires, behavioural observations and an experimental analysis of behaviour. Interviews and questionnaires can be conducted in person or over the telephone at a convenient time and / or location, or completed at home and posted back to us. Behavioural observations and experimental analysis of behaviour can be conducted at the university, at home, at school or at a child development centre (with permission).

The sleep assessment will consist of participants wearing an actigraph (wrist worn device which records information about sleep) and parent completion of sleep and behaviour diaries for 5 days at home.

The physical and dental health assessment will be conducted at Attwood Green Health Centre in Birmingham by a community consultant paediatrician and special needs dentist. If health / dental conditions are identified, participants will be offered treatment and invited to participate in stage 2 of the research which is an evaluation of the effects of treating a health condition on self-injury.

Who can participate?

Any child who:

- Is aged between 2 and 14 years (inclusive);
- Lives in Birmingham/West Midlands;
- Is non-verbal or has limited speech;
- Shows self-injury.

If you are interested in participating in this study, or would like more information, please take a look at the project flyer. An expression of interest form can be found below. If you are interested in this study please fill in the form and return it to us at the address below, alternatively you can give us a call on 0121 414 7212, and we will be happy to discuss the study with you and/or send you a consent form for participation.

[Project flyer](#)

[Expression of interest form](#)

Get involved

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