



Paediatric Autism Communication Therapy (PACT)

INFORMATION SHEET



What is Paediatric Autism Communication Therapy (PACT)?

PACT is a parent training program designed for parents of young children with Autism. PACT helps parents understand and communicate more effectively with their child to promote the development of social communication skills. Skills taught in PACT are designed to support development through play and natural interactions. Parents and the therapist work together, reviewing the child's play with parents using video playback. The parents learn individual strategies to develop their child's social and communication responses, as well as using supportive language strategies.

The intervention involves fortnightly individual sessions for six months and parents are asked to undertake 30 minutes daily practice at home between the sessions. For some families additional follow-up sessions may be available.

Who developed PACT?

PACT is based on work undertaken by Speech Pathologists at the University of Manchester, University of Newcastle and Guys Hospital, London, and has been researched in a large



randomised control trial to check its acceptability and effectiveness. Telethon Kids Institute has several staff members who have received PACT training in Manchester by the programme's developers. PACT is used in, England, Wales, Pakistan, Italy, France and Hong Kong.

What does the research say?

PACT is included in the evidence for the British National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines for the management and support of people with Autism (2013). The findings of research into PACT have been published internationally in peer reviewed journals.

PACT was researched in a large scale randomised control trial (152 children assigned to PACT or regular community treatment) between 2006 and 2009, with follow up six years later. Immediately after PACT there was a significant improvement in parent-child interaction in the PACT group. Some improvements were noted in both groups in receptive and expressive language, child initiations and autism severity, however these differences were not significantly different between groups. At the six-year follow-up, children who received the PACT intervention were found to have reduced autism severity as well as improvements in parent-child communication in comparison to the community treatment group. Parents of children in the PACT group also reported improved peer relationships, social communication and repetitive behaviours in their children.

Results of the PACT follow-up study have been widely reported and both the initial and follow-up studies have been recognised for their strong study design and scientific rigour.

Who is PACT suitable for?

PACT is suitable for children aged 2-6 years experiencing social communication challenges. PACT has been found to be beneficial for children across a range of communication levels, including those children who have not yet developed verbal language. PACT is not well suited to children with high level language skills. PACT is currently being adapted and researched for use with school age children with Autism up to 11 years.

Who can provide PACT therapy?

PACT can be provided by accredited therapists who have received PACT training and completed the certification process. Training involves pre-course learning in addition to a face to face workshop. Following the workshop therapists complete certification by sending videos of PACT sessions to an external evaluator who assesses if the clinician is adhering to PACT principles. PACT clinicians are often Speech Pathologists.

How can I get involved?

CliniKids is currently taking enquiries from families who would like more information about PACT or who would like to receive PACT therapy. If you would like to register your interest or access further information please contact us.

clinkids@telethonkids.org.au or (08) 6319 1133.