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Original Article

Feasibility and Acceptability of a Telehealth Model for Autism Diagnostic Evaluations in Children, Adolescents, and Adults

Published in the Peer-reviewed Journal

Autism Research

The full article can be found here:

<https://doi.org/10.1002/aur.2591>

Key Terms

Feasibility studies examine whether a method, intervention, or program can be completed as intended.

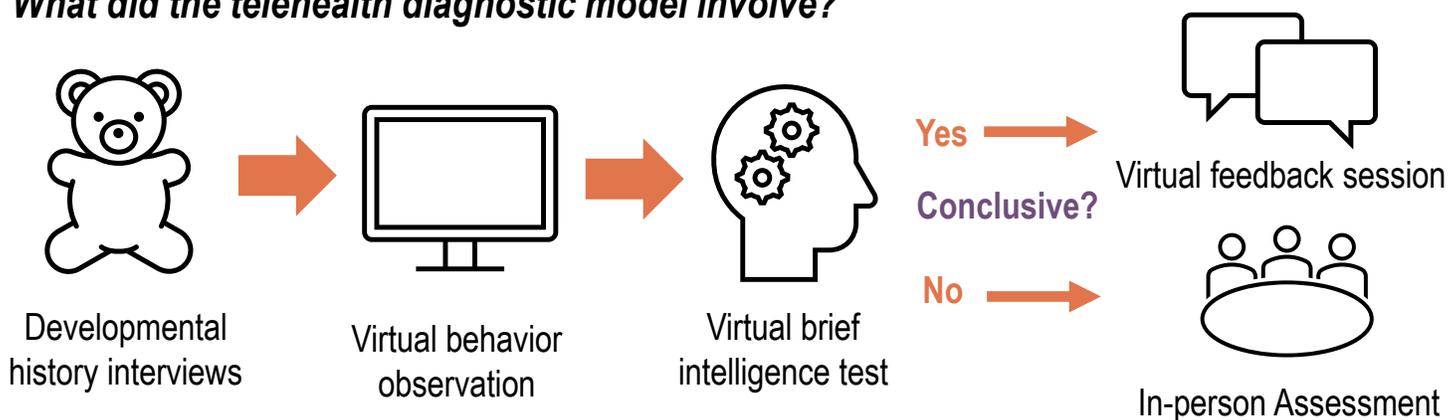
Acceptability studies examine whether participants perceive a method, intervention, or program to be appropriate and relevant.

Peer-reviewed journals include studies that have been read and critiqued by experts in the respective field to ensure they meet quality standards.

Why was this study conducted?

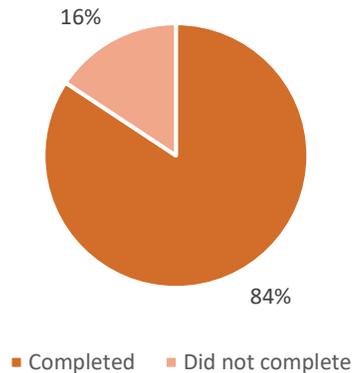
- At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, our autism diagnostic clinic transitioned to a telehealth model.
- Prior to the pandemic, our team developed the Naturalistic Observation Diagnostic Assessment, or NODA, to evaluate children under the age of 7 years, so our diagnostic clinic was prepared to transition to telehealth evaluations for children.
- Our diagnostic team developed a protocol for assessing older children, teenagers, and adults through videoconferencing.
- We collected data during this transition to document:
 - **Feasibility:** Whether it is possible to implement a telehealth diagnostic model for autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
 - **Acceptability:** Whether the telehealth methods were acceptable to the parents of diagnostic clients.

What did the telehealth diagnostic model involve?

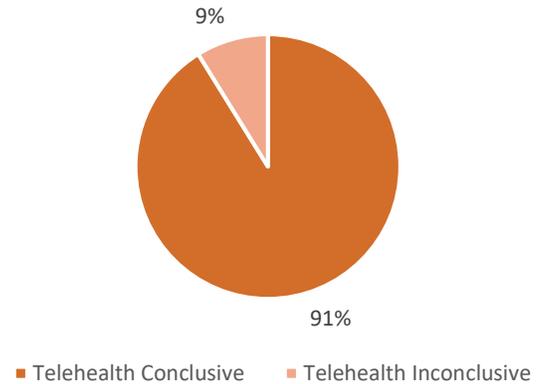


What were the main study findings?

84% of scheduled clients (102 out of 121) completed a telehealth evaluation



A diagnostic determination was made for 91% (93 out of 102) using only telehealth procedures



In-person assessments were necessary when:

ASD symptoms were subtle

Parent report was inconsistent with observed client behaviors

Client was inattentive during remote observation

Technological glitches during the remote observation

- Survey responses from licensed clinical psychologist indicated that the telehealth model was acceptable for use with most clients, but that telehealth procedures may be less acceptable for school-aged children (compared to children under the age of 5 years, adolescents, and adults)
- Most parents (58%) strongly endorsed acceptability of the telehealth method, but 16% of parents had neutral or negative responses regarding acceptability

What were the study's conclusions?

Findings highlight the potential of telehealth for increasing access to diagnostic evaluations for ASD during and after the pandemic.

Original Article Citation

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