

Learning Disability Specialist Library

Evidence Bulletin 003 – June 2007

What is it?

The LDSL is the learning disability specialist library of the National Library for Health. It exists to bring together and make available the best current evidence to support decision makers in supporting people with learning disabilities.

Each month, we scan a number of publications and highlight three or four key articles which add important new knowledge to the field. We will present the key messages from those articles in this bulletin, and link you to extended summaries or articles which will be available on the LDSL site.

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<http://www.library.nhs.uk/learningdisabilities/>

- **What are the signs that carers of adults with Down Syndrome and Dementia first note, leading to diagnosis of dementia?**

This article by Karen Watchman reports the findings from a postal questionnaire survey carried out with members of Down's Syndrome Scotland. The average age of those with dementia was lower than in other studies, and not surprisingly, the average age of carers was older than for the general population. The early signs were not those associated with loss of memory, leading to suggestions by the author for training and support for GPs and Day Support staff. The majority of carers in the survey did not share the diagnosis with the person with Down Syndrome, and the author discusses the implications of this in the article.

Dementia and Down Syndrome the Diagnosis and Support Needed, Watchman K
Learning Disability Practice Vol 10; no 2 10-14

LDSL summary

<http://www.library.nhs.uk/learningdisabilities/ViewResource.aspx?resID=262207&tabID=289&catID=7025>

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- **How is Assertive Outreach organised in services for people with learning disability, and what impact does it have?**

Assertive community treatment was developed as a way to coordinate support for people with severe mental illness in the community. Although psychiatric disorder is more prevalent in people with learning disability than the general population, they are less likely to use specialist psychiatric services. This article describes the setting up and functioning of an assertive outreach team for people with learning disability and severe and enduring mental illness. The article reports an audit and clinician questionnaire which suggests some improvements in engagement, but no reduction in bed occupancy. Suggestions for further research are made.

Assertive Outreach Teams for Adults with Learning Disability, Prakash J, Andrews T & Porter I, in *Psychiatric Bulletin* (2007) 31; 138-141

LDSL Summary

<http://www.library.nhs.uk/learningdisabilities/viewResource.aspx?resID=262209&code=60372641b75a1567979ba35345133c98>

- **Does training improve the knowledge, awareness and attitudes of staff towards mental health problems in people with learning disabilities?**

This study set out to look at the impact of a training intervention on staff working with people with learning disabilities in South London. One group of staff was offered an established introductory training on mental health in people with learning disabilities, and matched with a comparison group who did not receive the training.

The study identified knowledge and awareness of mental health problems before the training began using the PAS-ADD checklist and a 15 point checklist developed for the study.

The study considered the factors that impact on referral decisions by direct support staff, when deciding whether or not to refer on to mental health services.

The authors suggest that the training was associated with increased knowledge of psychopathology, and that it improved staff attitudes towards mental health services, increasing the likelihood of referral decisions.

The Role of Training in Improving Community Care Staff Awareness of Mental Health Problems in People with Intellectual Disabilities, Costello H, Bouras N, Davis H in *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 20 (3), 228–235.

LDSL Summary

<http://www.library.nhs.uk/learningdisabilities/viewResource.aspx?resID=262293&code=813484ea92c16edc96fef443fabea0b8>

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- **What are the benefits of risperidone as a treatment for 'violent and self-injurious behaviour'?**

This open label study worked with twenty-four participants, who all received oral, flexible-dose risperidone of 0.5–6 mg/day for 12 weeks. Outcomes were measured in changes in behaviour (Aberrant Behaviour Checklist) with secondary outcomes rated with validated measures of depression, autism, Quality of Life and global condition. The authors suggest significant improvements maintained throughout the study in primary outcomes, with improvements also in secondary measures, suggesting risperidone was efficacious and well tolerated in this small study.

An Open-Label Study of Risperidone in the Improvement of Quality of Life and Treatment of Symptoms of Violent and Self-Injurious Behaviour in Adults with Intellectual Disability
Read S.G.; Rendall M in *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 20 (3), 256–264.

LDSL Summary

<http://www.library.nhs.uk/learningdisabilities/ViewResource.aspx?resID=262216&tabID=289>

What else is new?

[Parents Plus Programme 1: Evaluation of Its Effectiveness for Pre-School Children with Developmental Disabilities and Behavioural Problems](#) Quinn M, Carr A, Carroll L, O'Sullivan D in *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*

This study evaluates effectiveness of the 'Parents Plus' programme (a group-based parent training package involving video modelling) with families of pre-school children with developmental disabilities and significant behavioural problems in the Irish health service. The study worked with 22 treated cases and 19 waiting-list controls taking pre and post test measurements.

The results suggested that the treated group showed better adjustment on the total difficulties scale of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, gains which were maintained at 10-month follow-up. The treatment group also reported high level of satisfaction with programme.

The authors suggest that for some families of pre-school children with developmental disabilities and significant behavioural problems, the Parents Plus programme is an effective intervention.

<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-3148.2006.00334.x>

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