

Evaluating The Effectiveness of Speech-Language Pathology Interventions for Autistic Children and Youth

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Introduction

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) play a crucial role in the delivery of support services for autistic children and youth by improving outcomes such as language, communication and social interaction. However, a recent systematic review of assessment and intervention practices found a paucity of clinical guideline documents in the field speech-language pathology and the provision of services to autistic individuals (Choi, Cardy & Binns, submitted).

Project aim: to support the development of a guidance document for SLPs working with autistic children and youth, a three-pronged approach will be used to develop recommendations: integrating knowledge from research, community and partnerships with SLPs (Figure 1). Research will inform the document by conducting a review of the existing interventions delivered by SLPs, evaluating their effectiveness and clinical relevance.

Figure 1: Three-pronged approach of guidance document development



Methods

This project is an umbrella review, compiling evidence from existing reviews of SLP interventions to investigate the outcomes of these reviews and their quality.

Articles were screened and included based on:

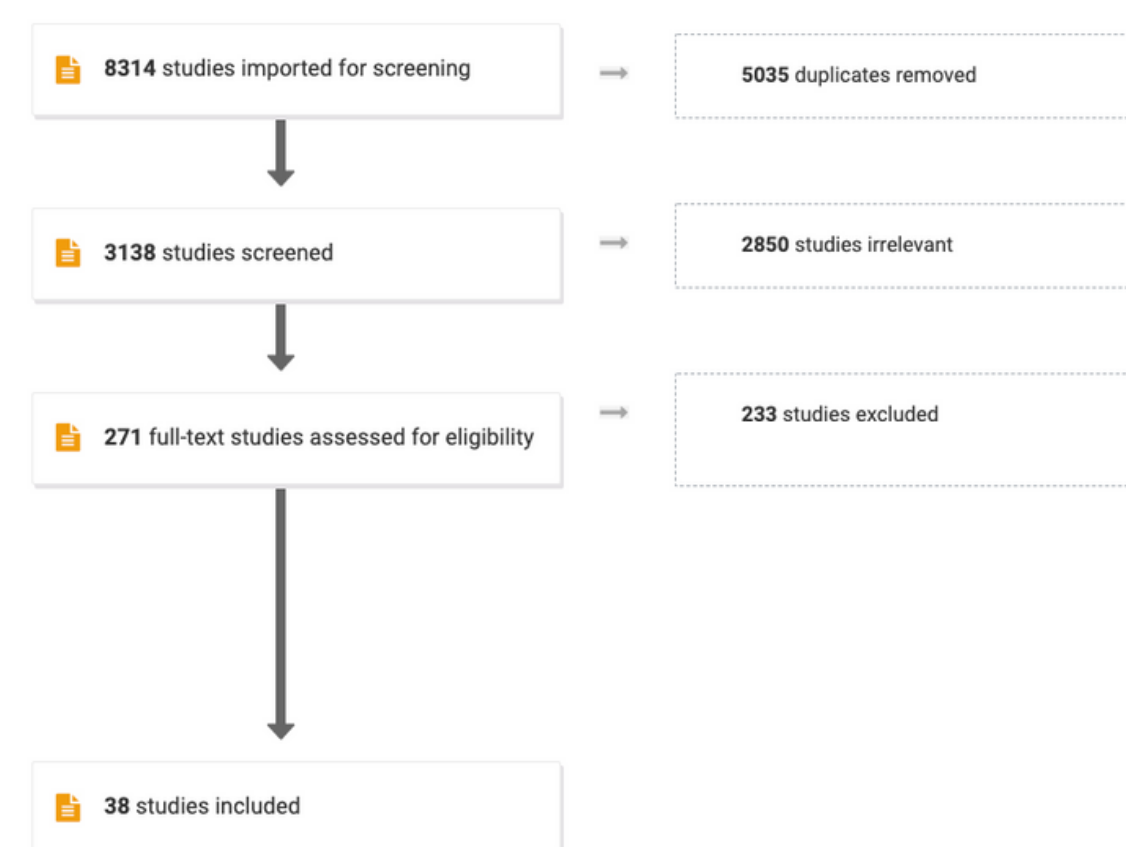
- Relevance to SLP-delivered interventions
- Outcome areas within scope of practice of SLPs
- Research designs of included studies (only RCTs)

Articles are undergoing data extraction and quality appraisal by two reviewers (L.D., L.C) using the AMSTAR-II tool.

Results

The title and abstracts of 3138 articles were screened, 271 articles underwent full-text review and 38 studies met inclusion criteria (Figure 2). Data extraction and quality appraisal are still being conducted at the time of publication.

Figure 2: Adapted PRISMA Model for Umbrella Review of SLP Interventions



Reviews with a mix of non-RCTs and RCTs were included if RCT-specific results were reported (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Study Designs from Included Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses

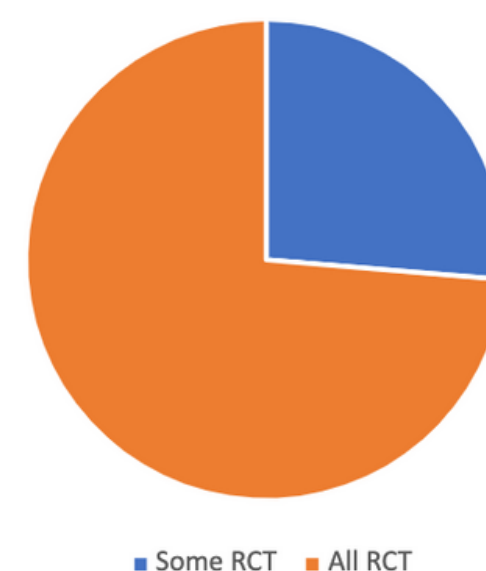
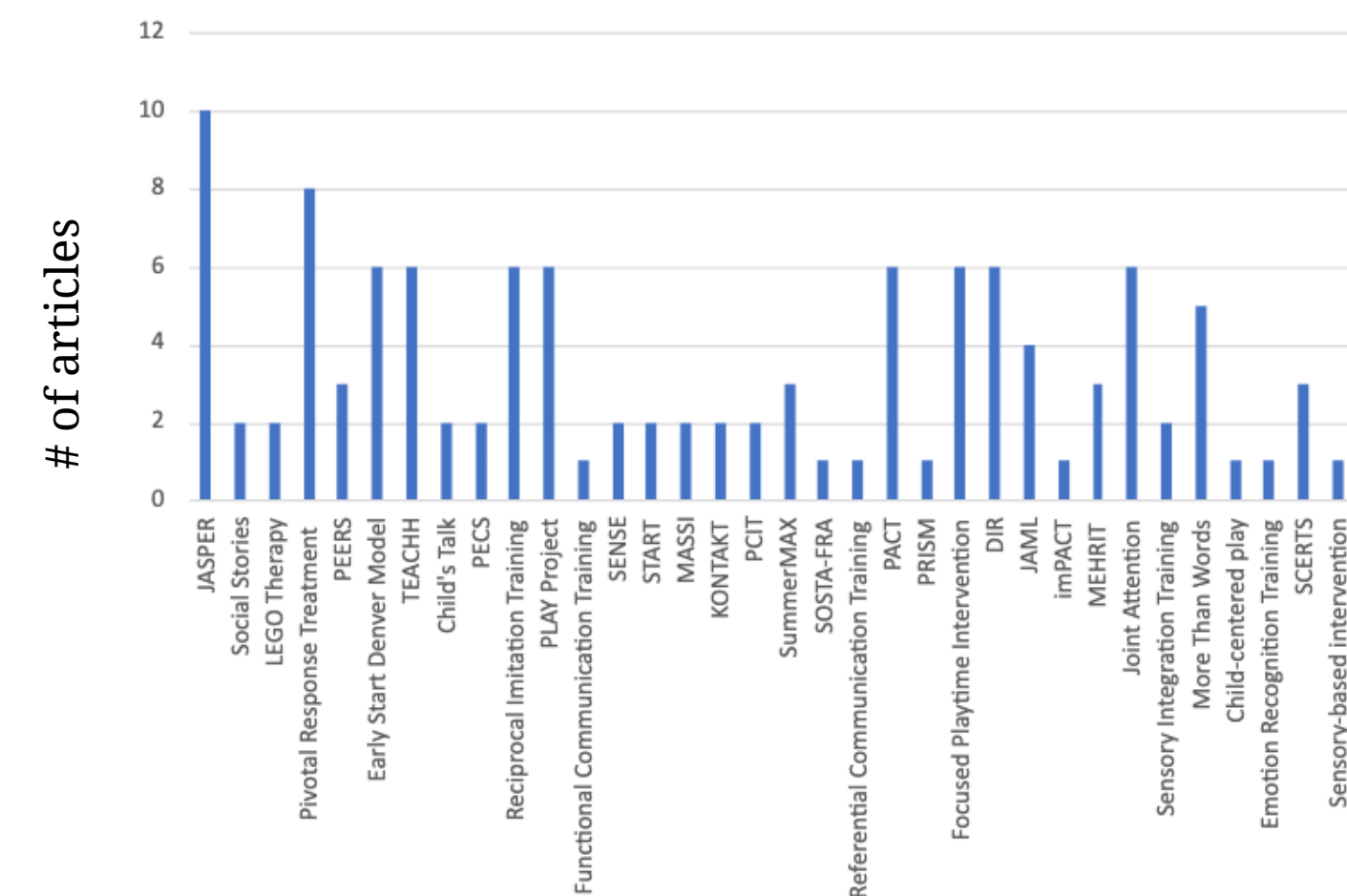


Figure 4: Specific Interventions Mentioned in Included Articles



Broad categories of interventions (e.g. parent-mediated) and specific brand-name interventions (Figure 4) were included within the umbrella review.

Discussion

The results of the umbrella review will allow conclusions to be drawn regarding effectiveness of SLP interventions. Conclusions will inform 'Intervention' section of the guidance document, highlighting important considerations for clinicians when working with autistic children and their families.

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