Intervention Using Games for Children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders

“Serious Games” are adaptations of technology and media whose purpose is to instruct and treat rather than to entertain. While the largest users of serious games are government and medical professionals, they are designed both for adults and for children and such games are coming into wide use in a variety of settings from health care and business to a number of applications designed for the education of children both at home and at school. Games are also being developed to provide cognitive-behavioral therapy for children with various disorders. Videogames are popular with both children and adults; a recent 2008 Pew Report revealed that 97% of children play videogames. Many studies have established that computer instruction can be effective as a support for learning and games, when used appropriately, can offer learning techniques that are difficult to provide in the classroom. For instance, a game can be available when the learner is and “willing” to repeat a learning opportunity until it is mastered.

In the last decade, as these new technologies have been created, a variety of multimedia including computer games, videos, and web delivered resources have been developed in attempts to provide novel programs designed for the different learning styles of children with developmental disabilities, particularly autism. Multimedia computer software has been shown to help children with autism deal with social problems by teaching new behaviors, including conversation skills and understanding feelings and emotions. Videos, often combined with game play, are effective in helping children with autism understand social cues. MindReading, FaceSay, The Transporters, and Do2Learn.com’s product FACELAND are software emotion recognition programs
that have established through clinical trials that children and adults with autism can learn to recognize a variety of complex emotions and mental states with limited home computer practice using photos and video in computer practice sessions.

Less attention has focused on FASD and, indeed, the only computer-based interventions for this disability are those produced by Do2Learn.com, which focused on the development of safety skills. For more information on intervention using games for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities such as FASD, please see www.Do2learn.com For further information regarding this article please contact Claire D. Coles, Ph.D., at the Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development Project, Emory University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, 1256 Briarcliff Road, N.E., Suite 309W, Atlanta, Georgia, 30306. You can also phone us at 404-712-9800 or visit our website at http://www.emory.edu/MSACD

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