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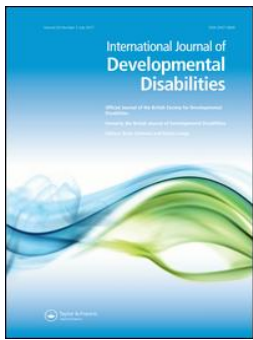
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Controversial Therapies for Autism and Intellectual Disabilities: Fad, Fashion, and Science in Professional Practice

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Book Review

Controversial Therapies for Autism and Intellectual Disabilities: Fad, Fashion, and Science in Professional Practice, 2nd edition by Richard M. Foxx and James A. Mulick. New York, Routledge; 2016. ISBN 978-1-138-80223-0

Controversial Therapies for Autism and Intellectual Disabilities: Fad, Fashion, and Science in Professional Practice (2nd edition) was published ten years after the first edition, and is a valuable resource for stakeholders who teach or make educational decisions for learners with autism and intellectual disabilities (ID). A primary contribution is that it will help professionals differentiate between ineffective instructional methods and therapies and those supported by evidence. Throughout the text, chapter authors provide relevant background information, review existing evidence, and suggest ways for professionals to determine whether a treatment is supported by scientific evidence. Divided into five sections, the text offers insight into which approaches to early interventions, such as treatment, therapy and remedial education truly benefit individuals with autism and ID.

The first part of this book covers 'General Issues' and includes contextual information to support reader understanding about how various professionals in education, psychology, medicine, and law often contribute, albeit unknowingly, to the perpetuation of pseudoscientific and unsubstantiated treatments. 'Where Do Fads Come From?', 'The Nature and Value of Empirically Validated Interventions', and 'The Appeal of Unvalidated Treatments' convey key concepts, offer a review of current practices supported by evidence, and emphasize the need to apply logic and scientific principles to evaluate claims about therapeutic effects. These chapters encourage readers to critically examine how persuasive language, desperation for cures, and other propaganda techniques can mislead professionals, as well as influence public opinion, policy, and law.

The second part of the text focuses on 'Historical, Cultural and Psychological Issues.' 'History of Fad, Pseudoscientific, and Dubious Treatments in Intellectual Disabilities', provides a captivating overview of the history of questionable treatments and key components of sound research methodology. Here is where several chapters analyze the most appalling illustrations of bad practice. They include: psychomotor processing, gentle teaching, sensory integration theory, auditory integration therapy, facilitated communication, nonaversive interventions,

positive behavioral support, biological or alternative medical interventions, and energy based and paranormal-based therapies. The discussion outlines longstanding factors that can lead to practitioner acceptance without evidence of effective outcomes. 'The Delusion of Full Inclusion', is a must read as is 'Explaining Gullibility of Service Providers Toward Treatment Fads.' 'Developmental Disabilities and the Paranormal' explains why autism attracts dubious therapies.

In part three, 'Field Specific Issues' are addressed in greater detail. 'Fads in Special Education', 'The Neutralization of Special Education, Revisited', and 'Fads and Controversial Treatments in Speech-Language Pathology', articulate the need for evidence-based methods in different but related professions. Other chapters cover Alternative Augmentative Communication Technology, Facilitated Communication, Rapid Prompting Method, Auditory Integration Training, and Reading Recovery. A primary conclusion is that students with autism and ID need to learn more skills in less time than their peers, but poor outcomes persist because professionals often do not use demonstrably effective methods.

Part four, 'Disorder and Symptom Specific Issues', focuses on advantages and disadvantages of biomedical, mechanical and psychosocial fad interventions such as Rebirthing Therapy, Floortime, TEACCH, and applied behavior analysis. Chapters titled 'Autism: A Twenty-First Century Fad Magnet', 'Helping Parents Separate the Wheat from the Chaff', 'A Map Through the Minefield', and 'The Perpetuation of the Myth of Nonaversive Treatment of Severe Behavior', offer readers insight into why stakeholders utilize unproven techniques and strategies. Several available procedures are described to support readers in evaluating research to make informed decisions and effectively use the limited resources available in order to improve outcomes.

In part five, 'Intervention Specific Issues', the writers offer detailed analysis of several questionable therapies in chapters titled 'Sensory Integration Therapy', 'Auditory Integration Training', 'Facilitated Communication', 'Positive Behavior Support', 'Non-aversive Treatment', 'Gentle Teaching', 'Pet Me, Sniff Me, Squeeze Me', 'Relationship Based Therapies', 'Old Horses in New Stables', 'The Gluten Free, Casein Free Diet', and 'Why ABA is not a Fad, a Pseudoscience, a Dubious or Controversial Treatment, or Politically Correct.' The contributing authors cover separate topics, but agree that

interventions utilizing the principles of applied behavior analysis have produced wide-ranging, long-lasting benefits to individuals with autism and ID.

In part six, 'Ethical, Legal and Political Concerns', provides readers with a thought provoking discussion on how cultural and political trends can adversely influence the implementation of EBPs. 'Ethics, Controversial Treatment, and Applied Behavior Analysis', 'The National Institutes of Health Consensus Development Conference on the Treatment of Destructive Behaviors: A 25 Year Update of a Study in Hardball Politics', and 'Teaching Ethics in Behavior Analysis', provide very interesting information related to investment in autism and ID research, as well as the costs of providing services and care for these individuals who do not attain better outcomes due to ineffective education and treatment. These facts emphasize the need for professionals to be good stewards of public funds and insist on effective educational practice and treatment.

In conclusion, this book is an important text for educators, parents, and other professionals involved in making decisions about and/or providing services to individuals with autism and ID. It is essential for all key stakeholders involved in service delivery to think critically and use informed caution to assess marketplace models, theories, and interventions. The editors and authors expect professionals to question claims and carefully evaluate the evidence for therapies they encounter. This expectation is supported by an ethical obligation to effectively serve individuals with autism and ID as well empirical responsibility to pursue and conduct research to successfully meet the evolving needs of individuals with autism and ID.

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