Rachel DeCarie, MOT, OTR/L; Dr. Sonia Kay, Ph.D. OTR/L; Rachel Khalifa, M.S. OTR/L; Nicole Wilson, M.S. OTR/L;
Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, FL

Abstract

The use of Weighted/Compression Vests is an intervention strategy that is used by the occupational therapist (OT) to facilitate increased attention and emotional regulation. The vest provides the individual with continuous proprioceptive input.

Limitations of Previous Research

Lack of controlled experimental manipulation:
1. Studies used an A-B or randomized design.
2. Small sample size.
3. No qualifying criteria for wearing the vest.
4. The duration of all research studies was fairly short. Studies conducted varied from 3-9 weeks.
5. Studies examined only most common stereotyped behaviors for children with autism or pervasive developmental disorder.

Threats to internal validity:
Changes in behavior were isolated to effects of the weighted vest and not an unknown variable for all participants

External validity:
Weak descriptions of independent variables.

Method/Protocol

**Student Identification**
1. The Sensory Profile School Companion was given to newly enrolled Baudhuin students.
2. Distribution and use of the weighted/compression vests was determined based on the results of the Sensory Profile School Companion.
3. Collaboration between teacher and OT occurred to identify one target behavior for improvement.
4. One week of baseline data was collected on this behavior.

**Implementation of the Vest**
1. Five percent of the child’s body weight was used and was equally distributed to all parts of the vest.
2. Initially, the student was acclimated to the vest by wearing it during a highly preferred and enjoyable activity, for a 10 minute time period several times a day.
3. The vest was placed on the student 10 minutes before the targeted activity and 20 minutes during the activity, for a total of 30 minutes.
4. The student wore the vest for a maximum of 20-40 minutes; and then removed it for the same amount of time.

Conclusion

At the completion of the 9th week of vest usage, the classroom teacher will collect one week of data on the targeted behavior and then share the original and follow-up data with the OT.

The OT and the teacher will determine if continued use of the vest will be recommended.

Discussion

The implementation of the weighted compression vest using a structured protocol has led to increased consistency and appropriate use of the weighted/compression vest in the school setting. The challenges have been identifying measurable target behaviors and consistent implementation of the protocol across all classrooms. This research is ongoing and the results of this study are pending.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:
1. Examine the limitations of current literature
2. Develop a criteria to determine which children would benefit from the use of a weighted/compression vest.
3. Establish a weighted/compression vest protocol that can be used consistently to provide effective results.
4. Establish appropriate goals for the use of the weighted compression vest.

References