Does Hydrotherapy Have A Positive Impact On The Wellbeing Of Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder?
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Aim: To investigate the effectiveness of a four-week hydrotherapy program aimed at improving social, psychological, and emotional wellbeing of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Design: Within-subjects, randomised crossover trial where children with Autism Spectrum Disorder participated in a 4-week intervention period and acted as their own controls over a corresponding 4-week control period

Methods: Eight children (males: n = 6; females: n = 2, mean age = 8.72 ± 1.99 years) with Autism Spectrum Disorder were randomised into two groups (Group 1, n=4; Group 2, n=4). Each child participated in a 45-minute hydrotherapy session (intervention), once per week over 4 weeks. The Child Behaviour Checklist was completed by parents at weeks 0, 4 and 8 to measure changes in wellbeing across the intervention and control periods. Mean change scores for intervention periods were compared to change scores for control periods using paired samples t-tests.

Results: Significant differences in mean change scores for: Total Problems (p=0.03) domain, Internalising Problems domain (p= 0.05), Anxious/Depressed syndrome (p=0.05) and Attention Problems syndrome (p=0.03) were found suggesting an improvement during the intervention period above that of the control period.

Conclusion: Hydrotherapy can enhance emotional and psychological wellbeing of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and could be considered as a beneficial therapy option, either alone or in conjunction with other therapy modalities.

Key Practice Points:
- Hydrotherapy may be appropriate, either independently or as an adjunct therapy, for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder to benefit their emotional and psychological wellbeing
- If used, one-on-one hydrotherapy sessions are recommended.