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Implementation of the Early Start Denver Model in an Italian community

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Abstract: Identifying effective, community-based specialized interventions for young children with autism spectrum disorder is an international clinical and research priority. We evaluated the effectiveness of the Early Start Denver Model intervention in a group of young children with autism spectrum disorder living in an Italian community compared to a group of Italian children who received treatment as usual. A total of 22 young children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder received the Early Start Denver Model in a center-based context for 6h per week over 6months. The Early Start Denver Model group was compared to a group of 70 young children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder who received treatment as usual for an average of 5.2 h over 6months. Children in both groups improved in cognitive, adaptive, and social skills after 3months and 6months of treatment. Children in the Early Start Denver Model group made larger gains in cognitive and social skills after 3 and 6months of treatment. The Early Start Denver Model group made larger gains in adaptive skills after 3months of treatment. Our results are discussed in terms of implications for intervention research and clinical practice. Our study supports the positive impact of the Early Start Denver Model in a non-English-speaking community.