

Med Hypotheses. 2008;70(4):748-9. Epub 2007 Sep 10.

Play with online virtual pets as a method to improve mirror neuron and real world functioning in autistic children.

Altschuler EL.

Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, University Hospital, Newark, NJ 07103, United . eric.altschuler@umdnj.edu

Abstract

Autism is a severe disease with no known cause and no cure or treatment. Recently, ourselves and subsequently others found that so-called "mirror neurons" - neurons that respond not only when a person moves, but upon observation of movement in another - are dysfunctional in autistic children. Here I suggest an easy, simple, inexpensive and fun method to improve mirror neuron functioning in autistic children, increase appreciation in autistic children for the theory of mind and thinking of others, and most importantly hopefully to improve real world functioning: play with virtual online pets that are the "embodiment" of a stuffed animal the child has. Adoption and then care and play with online pets forces, in a fun way, one to think about the world through the eyes and needs of the pet. A simple method to test this play with online virtual **pet therapy** is described.

PMID: 17826922 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

MeSH Terms

LinkOut - more resources