

Guanfacine shown safe and effective in autism treatment

August 31 2015, by Quinn Eastman

Several different drugs are used for reducing hyperactivity and impulsive behavior in children, but most of these medications have not been well-studied in autism spectrum disorder. In a new article in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Lawrence Scahill, MD, from the Marcus Autism Center, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, and Emory University School of Medicine, and colleagues across the United States present the results of a multisite trial for extended-release guanfacine in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). They report that the extended-release form of guanfacine is safe and effective for reducing hyperactivity and impulsiveness in ASD.

At five sites, children with ASD and moderate to severe hyperactivity were either given guanfacine or a placebo tablet for eight weeks, in a randomized and double-blind clinical trial. The research team collected information from parents and measured each child's overall response. After eight weeks of treatment, extended release guanfacine was superior to placebo for decreasing hyperactivity and impulsiveness.

Guanfacine was originally developed to reduce blood pressure in adults. The extended release product, which is given once a day, has been tested in children and is approved for the treatment of ADHD. This was the largest study of guanfacine in children with ASD.

Based on these results, the team suggests that monitoring of [blood pressure](#) and pulse is important particularly in the early stages of taking guanfacine. The trial results suggest that, as in ADHD, extended-release

guanfacine is a safe and effective treatment for [hyperactivity](#) and impulsiveness in ASD.

More information: "Extended-Release Guanfacine for Hyperactivity in Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder"
[dx.doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2015.15010055](https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2015.15010055)

Provided by Emory University

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