

HANDOUT 1–9b

Early Television Exposure and Subsequent Problems in Children

By

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Objective. Cross-sectional research has suggested that television viewing may be associated with decreased attention spans in children. However, longitudinal data of early television exposure and subsequent attentional problems have been lacking. The objective of this study was to test the hypothesis that early television exposure (at ages 1 and 3) is associated with attentional problems at age 7.

Methods. We used the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, a representative longitudinal data set. Our main outcome was the hyperactivity subscale of the Behavioral Problems Index determined on all participants at age 7. Children who were ≥ 1.2 standard deviations above the mean were classified as having attentional problems. Our main predictor was hours of television watched daily at ages 1 and 3 years.

Results. Data were available for 1278 children at age 1 and 1345 children at age 3. Ten percent of children had attentional problems at age 7. In a logistic regression model, hours of television viewed per day at both ages 1 and 3 was associated with attentional problems at age 7 (1.09 [1.03–1.15] and 1.09 [1.02–1.16]), respectively.

Conclusions. Early television exposure is associated with attentional problems at age 7. Efforts to limit television viewing in early childhood may be warranted, and additional research is needed.

Source: Christakis, D. A., Zimmerman, F. J., DiGiuseppe, D. L., & McCarty, C. A. (2004, April). *Pediatrics*, 113(4), 708.