Today’s piece was prepared by Aaron Wightman, MD, and is based on an article from Time Magazine entitled “Like Crack for Babies:” Kids Love Baby Einstein, But They Don't Learn From It. <http://healthland.time.com/2010/09/07/like-crack-for-babies-baby-einstein-fails-again-in-new-study/>

This article reports on emerging evidence questioning the positive impact on child development of the very popular “Baby Einstein” videos. The article briefly mentions methodological criticisms of prior studies questioning the videos including response bias from parents and that all trials were observational in nature. They also mention a new randomized control trial in which 72 toddlers were divided into video instruction, parental instruction with or without a video, or no instruction groups and tested on their ability to learn 25 new words in a month. The article reports children taught by parents learned the most and the Einstein group did no better than the no intervention group. The author of this article attributes this difference among groups to the idea that children learn vocabulary by gestures and interactive communication with parents, things that a video cannot provide. Also mentioned are refunds offered by Disney for families who do not feel their child is learning from the videos. The authors finish the article by concluding that those while the AAP recommends no screen time for children under age 2 years, studies “don't show that watching educational videos or TV causes a loss of vocabulary, so at least harried parents who need the electronic babysitter to keep their sanity don't have to feel guilty about that.”

This is an interesting article which presents a new study in a reasonably straight-forward manner. They nicely bring up limitations of observational cohort studies and also surveys. When explaining the newer study’s findings, however, the author of this article states only one explanation, that “researchers” believe this is due to children’s need to learn from gestures and interactive communications. The author cites another *Time* article (<http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1879269,00.html>) that discusses a paper that observed an association between socioeconomic status and number of gestures a toddler will make. The author infers that more gestures may explain why higher SES children perform better upon entering school. This makes the conclusion of our article slightly confusing. The author seems to be saying that although the videos are not recommended by the AAP and studies do not support their efficacy, families should not feel guilty about using them because no studies have shown them to be worse than nothing. As clinicians we are often asked by families with limited resources the best ways to educate and prepare their toddler for success in school and later in life. While reporting a study that ought to help parents make decisions about allotting limited resources, the author actually may have ended up muddying the waters further.

**TELEVISION AND TODDLER EDUCATION RESOURCES**

1. Smart Guide to Kids TV: AAP site dedicated to educating parents about TV choices: <http://www.aap.org/family/smarttv.htm>
2. What Do Parents Need To Know About Children's Television Viewing?US Department of Education website: <http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/TV.viewing.html>
3. LimiTV a nonprofit organization dedicated to limiting childhood TV. Website provides education, resources, and many other links [www.limitv.org](http://www.limitv.org)
4. Center on Media and Child Health: <http://www.cmch.tv/>
5. “Children and watching TV” American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry <http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/children_and_watching_tv>
6. “How Television Viewing Affects Childhood Development: A publication by the University of Maine outlines recommendations about the limitations television and gives suggestions about appropriate programming and how families may view together to enhance the experience <http://umaine.edu/publications/4100e/>
7. PBS recommendations for toddler television- provides a set of recommendation on choosing appropriate options for infant viewing, but stresses need to limit television time and that it does not count as learning and interacting time. <http://www.pbs.org/parents/childrenandmedia/tvmovies-preschool.html>

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