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SPET Findings in Mentally Retarded Autistic Individuals

Starkstein SE, Vazquez S, Vrancic D, Nanclares V, Manes F, Piven J, Plebst C
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The authors examined specific deficits of cerebral blood perfusion in autistic patients as measured with [(99m)Tc]HMPAO Single-Photon Emission Computed Tomography (SPECT). The study, conducted in an outpatient clinic setting, included a consecutive series of 30 patients with autism and 14 patients with mental retardation but no autism comparable in chronological age, mental age, height, weight, and head circumference. All participants were examined with a comprehensive psychiatric and neuropsychological battery and received a [(99m)Tc]HMPAO SPECT scan.

Autistic patients had significantly lower perfusion than the control group in the following brain regions: right temporal lobe (basal and inferior areas), occipital lobes, thalami, and left basal ganglia. The study demonstrated significant perfusion deficits in specific brain areas of moderately to severely mentally retarded autistic patients.

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