

Melillo Method

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Please note:

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The Research Team are unable to ensure that the information listed below provides an accurate & up-to-date snapshot of these matters

Research question: What is the Melillo Method and how are practitioners qualified/registered to deliver Melillo Method interventions?

Is there any evidence for the Melillo Method improving functional capacity and/or quality of life for 7 year old children with Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Are there potential risks of harm?

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2. Summary

The Melillo Method is a multimodal approach to improving neurodevelopmental difficulties. It may include different therapeutic modalities including sensory integration, movement exercises, cognitive exercises, dietary changes and behavioural therapy. Clients are offered an individualised approach that combines some or all of the available therapeutic techniques. Practitioners in Australia may be certified by the Interdisciplinary Association of Functional Neurosciences and Rehabilitation but do not require any other health or medical qualifications. Experimental research on the Melillo Method has been conducted using the Brain Balance program, an approach delivered through Brain Balance Centers in USA. While there is no source which explicitly equates the Brain Balance program with the Melillo Method, they were both invented by Robert Melillo and there do not appear to be differences in theory or practice. No experimental evidence was found to show that the Brain Balance program is effective for the treatment of people with autism. There is some published evidence supporting its use for children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. However, this evidence is preliminary and shows a high risk of bias.

It should also be noted that due to the complexity of the approach, other bodies of evidence exist for therapeutic modalities delivered in isolation. Due to the individualised and multimodal nature of the program, sessions may include a mix of evidence-based and non-evidence based techniques.

No significant risks of harm associated with the practice were identified.

3. Melillo Method

3.1 Background

The Melillo Method was developed by chiropractor Robert Melillo. It is a multimodal practice that aims to “identify brain imbalances and treat many symptoms of mental, attention, behavioral, and learning disorders in patients of all ages” (Melillo, 2023a). The method consists of sensory stimulation, cognitive exercises and movement exercises coupled with changes to diet, environmental changes and behavioural therapy. A European provider, the Melillo Method Learning Center states:

The goal is simple: restore balance to the brain by targeting specific networks on one side of the brain with very specific stimulation. By combining different types of stimulation (light, sound, smell, movement, inner ear, balance, touch) along with cognitive and academic activities etc., we can activate specific networks on one side of the brain, causing them to grow and become more connected (Melillo Method Learning Center, 2020).

Different practitioners include different offerings in their service description. The company Brain Balance Centers was co-founded by Robert Melillo (Brain Balance Centers, n.d. a; Lawrence, 2018). While no sources explicitly equate the Melillo Method with the Brain Balance program, they have the same aims and use the same techniques. Jackson and Wild (2021) describe the Brain Balance program as including:

- passive sensory stimulation in the form of tactile, olfactory, visual, and auditory stimulation, exercises targeting primitive and postural reflexes
- core muscle exercises
- proprioceptive and balance training
- vestibular exercises, including rotational, translational, and anterior-to-posterior movements
- fine motor activities, including the palmar grasp reflex and the Purdue Peg Board
- rhythm and timing exercises, including whole-body coordination activities and use of the Interactive Metronome®
- activities that aim to enhance auditory and visual processing, as well as coordination and endurance of eye movements (Jackson & Wild, 2021, p.29).

Other providers may implement the method in private practice in USA and around the world. The Melillo Method Learning Center operates out of Bulgaria. Australian providers include [Connect Movement Therapy](#), [Spiral Healing Rooms](#) and [Neurofit Brain Centre](#), though there may be others. Only Neurofit Brain Centre identifies that they are a registered NDIS provider (Neurofit Brain Centre, 2023).

Spiral Healing Rooms offers Primitive Reflex integration and digital therapies (Spiral Healing Rooms, n.d). Connect Movement Therapy includes personalised sessions of Primitive Reflex Integration, Core Strengthening & Postural Stability, Sensory & Motor Integration, Visual & Auditory Integration, Whole Body Vibration, Neurosage, and Laser Therapy (Connect Movement Therapy, 2022). Neurofit Brain Centre includes the above but also adds Interactive metronome, optomotor therapy, balance tracking training, acoustic therapy, transcranial stimulation therapy, colour & light therapy and exercise therapy (Neurofit Brain Centre, 2023).

The Melillo Method Learning Center (2020) offers this extensive list of possible activities:

- Sensory stimulation including light, optokinetic and other types of visual stimulation; sound and music therapy; smell and aromatherapy; tactile stimulation; balance and proprioception exercises; vestibular spinning activities.
- Provision of information on diet/nutrition
- Neurosage videogames, Neurosage virtual reality programs, Neurosage music, sound and vibration frequencies.
- Motor activities including primitive reflex exercises; developmental exercises; core stability exercises; muscle tone balancing exercises; dominance exercises; interactive metronome; eye balancing and tracking exercises; fine motor exercises.
- Behavioural/social therapy including mirroring therapy; behaviour modification; green therapy.
- Cognitive and academic activities for reading, math, spelling, listening, comprehension, attention, executive function, memory, decoding, phonemic awareness, concentration, organisation and goal setting.

3.2 Accreditation

The Interdisciplinary Association of Functional Neurosciences and Rehabilitation (IAFNR) provides certification in the Melillo Method. To sit the certification exam, participants must have completed all modules on the Melillo Method that are offered on Robert Melillo's website. Participants seeking certification do not require any other training or qualifications. (IAFNR, n.d.; Melillo, 2023b).

Brain Balance Centers in the USA may include their own training scheme separate from IAFNR accreditation (Brain Balance Centers, n.d. b).

3.3 Risks

No risks were identified in the practice of the Melillo Method.

Practitioners may differ in what they are permitted to offer. Brain Balance states that the program does not diagnose or treat medical conditions (Brain Balance Centers, n.d. c).

However, Robert Melillo's website does state that the method can be used to treat neurodevelopment and learning disorders (Melillo, 2023).

4. Evidence

Robert Melillo makes the case for his theory that hemispheric brain imbalances cause neurodevelopment disorders in several theoretical papers. These articles provide a theoretical basis for his therapeutic approach but do not include experimental evidence regarding the efficacy of the Melillo Method (Melillo et al, 2022; Leisman & Melillo, 2022; Melillo & Leisman, 2009).

A research pack developed by Brain Balance lists over 50 research papers that may lend theoretical support to their method. However, none of the papers cited considers or includes Brain Balance as an intervention. They do include an internal study of parental reports after therapy showing considerable effects (Brain Balance Centers, n.d. d).

Published peer-reviewed evidence does not refer to the Melillo Method. Instead, studies may investigate the Brain Balance program or Interactive Metronome training.

Several studies have found positive effect of the Brain Balance program (Teicher et al, 2023; Jackson & wild, 2021). However, the studies are preliminary and have significant risk of bias. Teicher et al (2023) reported an improvement in attention and hyperactivity, though results were inconsistent across outcome measures. They also note significant limitations including a 60% participant drop out rate. Jackson and Wild (2021) note improvements of children across several measures. However, this study has high risk of bias. The authors explicitly declare no conflict of interest despite the lead author (Jackson) being employed as Vice President of Programs and Outcomes at Brain Balance (Brain Balance Centers, n.d. d). Other studies authored by Jackson also support the use of the Brain Balance program (Jackson & Jordan, 2023; Jackson & Jordan, 2022; Jackson & Robertson, 2020).

None of the reviewed experimental studies state that any study participants were diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

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