

## Autism in adult life: The Challenges

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## Why ASD and Why Now?

- Prevalence
- Historically emphasis has been on childhood
- Fall through cracks
- Poor services
- Government responses

## Pervasive Developmental Disorders

- Autism
- Atypical autism
- Asperger's syndrome
- PDD NOS
- Rett syndrome
- Disintegrative psychosis

## Qualitative Impairments in Reciprocal Social Interaction

Failure to use non-verbal behaviours to regulate social interaction

Failure to develop peer relationships

Lack of shared enjoyment

Lack of socio-emotional reciprocity

## Qualitative Impairments in Communication

Lack of, or delay in spoken language and failure to compensate through gesture

Lack of varied spontaneous make-believe or social imitative play

Relative failure to initiate or sustain conversational interchange

Stereotyped, repetitive or idiosyncratic speech

## Repetitive and Stereotyped Behaviours

Encompassing preoccupation or circumscribed pattern of interest

Compulsive adherence to non-functional routines or rituals

Stereotyped and repetitive motor mannerisms

Preoccupations with part objects or non-functional elements of materials

## Associated Features

- 75% individuals with autism have MR
- 25-33% individuals with autism develop epilepsy
- Behavioural difficulties
- Problems with attention and overactivity
- Sensory oversensitivities

## Chakrabati and Fombonne (2001)

Disorder; rate/10000	Age of referral	Percentage male	Percentage normal IQ
Autism 16.8	30 months	76.9	30.8
Asperger 8.4	47.5 months	84.6	100
PDDNOS 36.1	37.2	80.4	92.4

## Mediating mechanisms

- Impaired social/communicative understanding
- Impaired social/communicative ability
- Impaired self control
- Impaired flexibility
- Anxiety
- Lack of goals
- Low self esteem

## Challenges

- Higher education
- Work
- Independence
- Relationships
- Co-morbid disorders
- Lack of ambition by others

## Needs

- Diagnosis
- Appropriate education
- Address handicaps
- Treat and prevent secondary handicaps
- Identification and recognition of strengths
- Work
- Fostering of developmentally appropriate ambitions
- Increase daily living skills and independence
- Social networks

## What are our goals?

- Highest possible quality of life
- Contribute to society

### Optimal management of a chronic disorder

- Not an acute illness model
- Individual and their family
- Optimising educational attainment
- Maximising social functioning
- Maximising independent living
- Optimal employment
- Ensuring social support

### Key aspects of management

- A plan
- Anticipation
- Prevention
- Regular review

### Acute management

- History
- What strategies are they using?
- Non-compliance?
- Environmental manipulation
- Medication
- Long term plan

### What is the goal of our intervention?

- Develop/repair a normative mechanism?
- Strengthen alternative strategies?

### Strategies

- Focussed education
- Environmental manipulation
- Behavioural approaches
- Anticipate transitions
- Life planning
- Employment
- Medication

### Communication skills

- Speech
- Context
- Groups
- Social chat
- Electronic communication

### Social skills

- Joint attention behaviours
- Turn taking
- One-to-one interactions with peers
- Interactions with groups
- Scripts/social stories
- Emotion recognition

### Interests and behaviours

- Limit intrusive/repetitive behaviours
- Turn interests/strengths into life opportunities
- Self help skills
- Teach planning skills

### Prevention of secondary handicap

- Anxiety
- Social isolation
- Depression

### Implications

- Prepare for adult life
- Targeted life long education
- Prevention rather than cure
- Early intervention
- Regular reviews