An Introduction to Autism

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CUPA-HR Webinar

Presenter

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Agenda

• Identify Autism Spectrum Disorder
• Possible Manifestations/Features
• Communication Challenges
• Interventions/Services
• Communication Tips
• Resources
Objectives

• Improve interactions with individuals on the autism spectrum

• Identify services sought through employee benefits
Poll Question

How much do you feel you know about Autism Spectrum Disorder?

- Almost everything
- A little
- Nothing
What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?
Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism
Asperger’s Syndrome
PDD-NOS
CDD

Inconsistency
Splitting diagnoses was difficult
Definition

A complex neurodevelopmental disability that impairs a person’s abilities to process input, communicate, and interact

- “Neurodevelopmental disability” = based in the brain and the way the brain works
- Appears to be based on combination of genes and environment
- Can be co-occurring with other conditions; critical to seek professional diagnosis
Manifestations/
Overarching
Features
Autism Spectrum?
Autism Spectrum?
Autism Spectrum?
Autism Spectrum
Neurodiversity

“The idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one ‘right’ way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits”

- ASD, ADHD, ABI, NVLD, OCD
- 7 Principles of Universal Design

health.Harvard.edu
Demographics

- No association with race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status
- 4x more common in males

Prevalence
- 2007 (*2000): 1 in 150
- 2009 (*2006): 1 in 110
- 2012 (*2008): 1 in 88
- 2016 (*2014): 1 in 68
- 2023 (*2020): 1 in 36
Differences in the Brain

• Neural connections built at/after birth
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNNsN9IJakws

• Pruning

• Experiences not translated into skills

• Stress response system

• Example:  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPknwW8mPAM&t=6s
Three Core Concepts in Early Development

1 Experiences Build Brain Architecture

NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD
Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNNsN9Ukws&t=75s&ab_channel=CenterontheDevelopingChildatHarvardUniversity
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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPknwW8mPAM&t=6s&ab_channel=NationalAutisticSociety
Accommodation Examples

Sensory
- fire drill notice
- alternative lighting
- noise cancelling headset
- desk pedaling unit

Personal digital assistant

Task separation

Job coaching
Duration

- Children may:
  - Have delayed development from birth,
  - Develop typically until sudden loss of skills [age 2-3], or
  - Seem on track until enough language/social skills would be present but instead atypical communication/preoccupations can be observed
- Does not end with childhood

lifetime social cost

Social costs associated with autism for 1990-2019 are estimated at $7 trillion dollars. If the rate of increase in prevalence continues, costs to society could reach nearly $15 trillion by 2029. These estimates only reflect what society pays, not the additional expenses families incur out of their own pockets.

Learn more about cost

https://tacanow.org/about-autism/
# Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-speaking</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep disorders</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elopement</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seizures</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above-avg. IQ</td>
<td>*40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastrointestinal problems</td>
<td>4x more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmet medical needs</td>
<td>4x more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-occurring medical conditions</td>
<td>95% (avg. of 4.9 each)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intersection of Laws
Dependence

Adults with ASD:
- 49% live with parent/relative
- 27% live in group homes
- 8% live in institutions
- 5% living situations are unknown
- 10% live independently
Middle-aged adults with ASD: 2.6x more likely to have a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s/other dementias

Risk

https://tacanow.org/about-autism/
• No cure
• Continuing stress on caregivers

"People who are 'high functioning' or 'don't look or act autistic' are still having a hard time. A lot of us do this thing called 'masking,' where we basically act as if we are neurotypical based on the stuff we learn from others. It is very exhausting to keep up that fake persona.” —u/jakobebeef98
"Autists are the ultimate square pegs, and the problem with pounding a square peg into a round hole is not that the hammering is hard work. It's that you're destroying the peg."

~ Paul Collins
Accessing Services

Health/Nursing Care
Speech and Language Therapy
Behavioral Health
Mental Health
Occupational Therapy
Physical Therapy
Additional Therapies (Developmental, Equine, Music, etc.)
Special Education
Mentoring
Accessing Services

- Education Advocacy
- Financial Assistance
- Employment Preparation
- Service Animals
- Adaptive Toys/Bikes/Learning Tools
- Durable Medical Equipment/Adaptive Clothes
- Consumable Medical Supplies
- Respite Care
- Legal/Financial Planning

*Check with local advocacy groups about emergency/police ID programs and unique offerings*
Services

ACNet sites

Tele-mentoring available

15 countries
Reduce sensory input - but make fidgets available.

Be direct and use literal language.

Tell them it is okay to stim.

Allow for the use of coping skills like counting, deep breathing, or recitations.

Don’t wait for/require eye contact.

Offer breaks.

Meet their preference/ability for means of communicating.

Check for understanding.

Don’t judge. Be patient and mindful of their right to maintain dignity. Remind others not to stare, whisper, or tolerate bullying. But later explain what you know instead of keeping the topic in the shadows.
HR Tips

Engage, listen, and model inclusivity
Focus on strengths
Consider whether forms and processes can change
  “always done this way” → why?
Interviews:
  - Small talk
  - Eye contact
  - Concepts vs Concrete
Event Neuroinclusivity:
  - info about venue, etc.
  - closed captioning
  - quiet areas for breaks and lunch
  - standing space for people who need to move
Takeaways: Autism is…

• Not Visible
• Everywhere
• Variable
• Not “Curable”
• Manageable With Resources
• NOT Misbehavior
Together
Together
Have a Question?

Submit questions to our presenters using the Chat.
Thank You

Please complete your event evaluation

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