

A Commentary on Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Complex Developmental Disorder

Received date: June 14, 2021; **Accepted date:** June 28, 2021; **Published date:** June 05, 2021

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Commentary

The Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a complex developmental disorder that affects communication, social interaction and behaviour. ASD is usually first diagnosed in the first two years age of childhood. People with ASD may look normal like others, it's the way they communicate, interact, behave, and learn differs from most other people. While most of the people with ASD grow to live a productive life; some need help in their daily lives.

The conditions such as autistic disorder, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), Asperger syndrome and childhood disintegrative disorder comes under autism spectrum disorder. The childhood disintegrative disorder is the rarest and most severe part of the spectrum.

The parents and caretakers are the first persons to observe whether the child's development is normal in the first 2-3 years. If the child does not respond to his name, does not point at objects of interest, does not play pretend games, avoid eye contact, avoid cuddles, delayed speech development, flip hands, spin objects in an unusual way, prefer to play alone, sleep disorder, have unusual way of smelling and tasting, then the child should be diagnosed for ASD.

Biologic, genetic and environmental factors are the risk factors that cause ASD. Children born to older parents, having a sibling with ASD, prescription drugs such as valproic acid and thalidomide when taken during pregnancy, individuals with fragile x syndrome and certain genetic conditions are at greater risk of acquiring ASD.

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Citation: Paula Barrett (2021) A Commentary on Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Complex Developmental Disorder. J Child Dev Disord. Vol.7 No.6.

The diagnosis of ASD now includes three conditions that were previously diagnosed separately: autistic disorder, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), and Asperger syndrome. These conditions are now referred to as autism spectrum disorder.

There is currently no cure for ASD. However, early intervention treatment services for children from birth to 3 years old can improve a child's development and learn important skills. Treatment includes therapy to help the child talk, walk, and interact with others and is highly structured and may involve parents, siblings, and other family members. A doctor may use medication to treat some symptoms that are common with ASD such as Irritability, Aggression, Repetitive behaviour, Hyperactivity, Attention problems, Anxiety and depression.