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ALMOST AUTISM

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Introduction: The hallmark social deficits of ASD are:

1. Poor eye contact
2. Limited emotional, facial and voice expression
3. Deficits in joint attention including deficits in showing and seeking recognition
4. Deficits in mutual enjoyment
5. Deficits in reading body language

These social deficits can be difficult to identify and to define even by trained clinicians, especially when there are multiple diagnoses, and other psychiatric disorders may have/mimic these social deficits.

Some of the social deficits characteristic of an ASD are found in conditions that are not ASD. The social deficits found in some children with ADHD are amplified when the ADHD is co-morbid with Social Anxiety disorders, Language disorders, OCD and/or Global Developmental Delay, making these children look “almost autistic”.

Objective: To demonstrate the difficulty in trying to differentiate the “almost autistic” child from a child with ASD.

Aim: To stimulate discussion over the difficulty of diagnosing ASD and differentiating ASD from other childhood psychiatric disorders.

Method: A Poster presentation with a video has been developed demonstrating “difficult to diagnose” children, and raising the alternative diagnoses.

Results: The distinction between ADHD, ASD, and other disorders and not clear

Conclusions: The prevalence of ASD has mushroomed in the last 20 years, partly because of greater awareness, but also because of criteria have been diffused to include other diagnostic groups. Until better diagnostic approaches occur, the clinician is dependent on observational strategies to make the diagnosis of ASD. Given the importance of the diagnosis, better techniques for diagnosis is required.