



# BEST, AND DEVELOPING PRACTICE IN SUPPORTING THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND AUTISM



## 31 MARCH - 01 APRIL 2023

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## BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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## BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

### **Accessibility in Higher Education for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities including autism**

**Christine Syriopoulou-Delli**, Associate Professor, University of Macedonia, Educational and Social Policy, Laboratory of Autism-Developmental Spectrum Disorders and Behavior Difficulties of the Human

#### **Abstract**

Due to adaptations in legislation and policy higher education has become more available to people with intellectual disability and/or autism spectrum disorders. Currently, students with intellectual and developmental disabilities are enrolled in universities. Innovations and measures are necessary at institutions of higher education in order to create, expand, or enhance high-quality, inclusive higher education experiences to support positive outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

With the emergence of these necessities, a field of research has emerged, offering new knowledge about what higher education can offer to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities including autism spectrum disorders as well as the positive impact these students can have on their peers, professors, and campus communities.

A further investigation on more long-term impacts of higher education on students' employment, independent living outcomes, and life satisfaction can follow as further research.

#### Keywords:

intellectual and developmental disability; autism; higher education; accessibility; inclusion

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## **Innovative initiatives and interdisciplinary synergies to support people with intellectual disability and autism.**

**Melina- Maria Dermetzopoulou**, Prefecture of Macedonia Deputy Governor of Public Health and Social Solidarity Region of Central Macedonia

### **Abstract**

This conference is particularly important, as it represents a barometer of every development effort that has taken place. In addition, today's conference raises society's awareness of the special possibilities of people with autism. Today, we set together the foundations for innovative initiatives and interdisciplinary synergies.

As the Vice Governor of Health and Social Solidarity in the Region of Central Macedonia, I strongly believe that the ones who are responsible for political decisions, should focus on ways to support autistic people, to understand their particular educational requirements, to give them the opportunities they deserve, to support their families and parents who take care of them and of course to also stand next to their teachers who carry out the great work-function of educating them, so that autistic people are included in our community.

The Region of Central Macedonia, implemented mental health projects and actions, with the aim to improve our fellow citizens access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality services, including health care and social services. The actions financed concern the strengthening of day centers and mental health units, which provide home nursing and special care services to people with mental disorders. They also include the Interconnection Program of existing day centers with local authorities units.

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### **Inclusive Education and [Intellectual] Disabilities: Current Trends and Challenges**

**Anastasia Vlachou**, Professor of Inclusive Education, Department of Educational Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

#### **Abstract**

Over the course of the last 30 years, inclusive education has emerged as a key aim of education policies around the world. Also in Europe, most countries took efforts to make their education systems more inclusive—which led to growing numbers of children and young persons with disabilities in general education in Europe. The implementation processes of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) fuelled these efforts. However, as some authors have argued, not all students with disabilities seem to have benefited in the same way from these developments—such as children and young persons with intellectual disability (ID). This presentation aims to explore this phenomenon in more depth by comparing some measures in relation to the implementation processes of the UNCRPD of seven European countries. Doing so, we analyze trends in placements (mainstream and special schools) of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in general and of students with intellectual disability specifically. As we show, an increase of students identified as having SEN in mainstream schools can be observed in all countries during the implementation process of the UNCRPD. However, in comparison to this rather broad group of learners, the percentage of students with intellectual disability in mainstream settings did not increase as much. Furthermore, the calculation of the “exclusion rate” revealed that this group of learners remains a key population of special schools. These results need to be understood as effects of specific shortcomings in the implementation of the UNCRPD.

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### Learning design in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School for the Holistic Approach of the ASD and intellectual Disabilities children's Individual Educational Needs

**Theodora (Doretta) Asteri**, PhD. NKUA, Scientific Advisor and Coordinator of the Scientific Unit "Special and Inclusive Education" at the Institute of Educational Policies, Ministry of Education

#### Abstract

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century School is an inclusive learning community based on **transformative education for the well being of all**-educators, pupils and their families, school personnel along with the digitalization of everything. In this context, we elaborate the idea on how we can put together expertise on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) teaching and ecology of learning, digital learning included. In other words, we question the resistance or resilience of our **traditional tools** for Individual Educational Planning, in the perspectives of the future of education.

Our case studies draw from the school life of ASD and intellectual disability pupils, no matter the grade. We discuss the opportunities, trends and constraints of traditional special education as we focus on the well-being of our ASD individual educational needs in an inclusive healthy and sustainable learning environment.

Our focus is on new learning, on affordable tools and critical pedagogy. Reflective activities are going to be organized on two main questions:

- (a) Pedagogies of Inclusion are focusing at the promotion of life skills, of 4Cs - especially the critical thinking -and the feel of belonging and feeling cared and respected. In the meantime, the new curricula and the Greek Educational Policies declare as main idea the **inclusion** of all and as main strand the **differentiation** of methodology and material. What are the descriptors of success of all? Do we need to differentiate the evaluation tools for ASD pupils' success?
- (b) Teaching methodology in our schools, mainstream and special, is characterized by content orientation, fragmentation of knowledge in subjects/specialists and limitation of interdisciplinary approaches. Though, after the implementation of Skills Labs, there is a place for non- typical learning methodology, for learning design methodology and for cooperation. What does this means for professionals in Special Education and their development?

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## Biological sex, Gender Identity and Autism Spectrum Disorder

**Panagiota Pervanidou**, Associate Professor of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, Head of the Unit of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, First Department of Pediatrics, School of Medicine, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece. President of the Hellenic Society of Developmental Pediatricians

### Abstract

Sex and gender are important parameters in understanding neurodevelopmental conditions and traits from childhood to adulthood. Neurodevelopmental disorders (intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, etc.), as a group, are more common and have been studied primarily in boys and men. The literature has only recently focused on female phenotypes and on understanding sex differences in brain and behavior. Furthermore, higher rates of diversity in gender identity have been noted in individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder relative to the general population. The understanding of sex differences, as well as the intersection between gender diversity and neurodiversity is a field of particular clinical and research interest.

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### Production of Greek singletons in adults with Down Syndrome: The case of Greek plosives, fricatives and affricates

KrystalleniaFiorentzi<sup>1</sup>, Alexandros-StamatiosAntoniou<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PhD candidate NKUA

<sup>2</sup>Professor NKUA

#### Abstract

There are three different types of Down Syndrome (DS) caused by alternations in chromosome 21, leading to abnormalities in the central nervous system. These abnormalities result in turn in other problems such as disparate language functions. Even though speech intelligibility increases with age and varies in DS, there is a considerable difficulty in understanding speech produced by people with DS. There are various factors that can lead to difficulties in speech intelligibility, such as physical malformations in the oral cavity, hearing loss and phonological processing deficits. Evidence for Greek speakers with DS is little, at least to our knowledge. The present study aimed at detecting differences between singletons produced by adult speakers with DS and singletons produced by typical adults. Two-syllable words in the form of CVCV were used. The consonants examined were Greek plosives, fricatives and affricates. Results indicated that Greek speakers managed to produce the target sounds in most trials but there were many instances of errors. The female speakers made more errors in affricates, while the male speakers with DS made more errors in fricatives. In addition, there was not a definite pattern as to whether word-initial or word-final position was more challenging for the groups. The presence of errors in singletons along with additional difficulties in vowel production that have also been found, attest to the need for proper intervention from a young age so that speech production is improved in DS.

Keywords: *Down Syndrome, adults, Greek, consonants, singletons*

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## Robots Application, Parental Involvement in Promoting Distance Learning inclusion for individuals with autism, intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

**EleniGkiolnta**, Phd candidate, **Christine Syriopoulou- Delli**, Associate Professor University of Macedonia, Laboratory of Autism -Developmental Spectrum Disorders and Behavior Difficulties of the Human (<https://labautism.uom.gr/>) University of Macedonia, Department of Educational and Social Policy, Laboratory of Autism -Developmental Spectrum Disorders and Behavior Difficulties of the Human

### Abstract

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders face many difficulties in various aspects of development due to their condition. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has led to closure of most businesses, organizations, and schools around the globe for extended periods of time, which interfered with the educational progress of all children, and especially of those with ASD. During this time, parents were charged with the duty of maintaining their children's schedule and routines through distance learning. In this study, the authors are going to discuss the aspects of distance learning for children with ASD and the current status and trends of distance learning for this group of children in Greece. The contribution of robotics in this specific field and the potential risks that come into view are also going to be analyzed.

Keywords: autism; ASD; children; distance learning; robotics; parents

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## Does Early Intervention Work?

**Loretta Thomaidis, MD, PhD**, Professor of Developmental Pediatrics National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

### Abstract

The efficacy of a well-structured early intervention program for children with clearly marked biological impairments is presented. Twenty-four children were placed into two matched groups in terms of age, sex, type of disability, functional level, and family socioeconomic status. The treatment group received a weekly educational visit from early intervention advisors for 2 years while the control group received no form of intervention due to lack of provision in the remote provincial towns and islands where the families were living. Four assessments using Griffith's developmental checklists were made in both groups: an initial assessment, a first year assessment, a second year assessment, and 8 months after the end of the program. The results are significantly encouraging. They show remarkable gains for the treatment group both in terms of overall functioning level and in terms of acceleration in different domains of development. The control group remained more or less stable. Gains for the treatment group continued to occur, but at a lesser rate, through the second year. Moreover, gains in development for the treatment group were not lost 8 months after the end of the program. Although the sample is rather small, there are clear indications that early intervention projects that treat children having biologically based disabilities are effective.

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## Social Skills Groups in Autism: Bridging Social Functioning and Competence

**Rebecca Tzorva**, M.A. Speech Language Pathologist

### Abstract

Social skills and communication difficulties are a fundamental issue of attention for therapists, teachers and families of individuals within the autism spectrum, as social deficits remain one of the most challenging areas for these individuals, affecting interpersonal relationships and thus social functioning and competence.

Individualized therapy programs seem not to be holistic as children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have difficulty in generalizing learned cognitive models and proposed acceptable behaviors at home, school and in other socializing settings with peers.

Group therapy programs emerged as a supplementing form of intervention to bridge this gap. Through specialized group and targeted individual intervention programs, structured physical activity and play, children and adolescents learn and practice conversational skills, social emotional reciprocity, develop problem solving skills and build self-confidence reducing stress and anxiety.

Imperative factors evidently are recognizing and identifying signs of autism in early childhood, early intervention, the successful selection of the group participants, the number of children in the group according to targeted treatment goals, outdoor real life setting activities, an active parental training program and counseling as well as parallel teacher involvement, support and training. Social skills groups come to augment the intervention protocols applied in order to facilitate generalization of learned skills to daily life.

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## After the formal diagnose, what is next?

**EleniGeorgiadouStefanaki**, mother of an adolescent in the Autistic Spectrum and President of M.A.m.AVerias(Welfare for People with Autism).

### Abstract

My name is EleniStefanaki, I am the mother of Fotis, 15 years of age, who is within the autistic spectrum.

From the moment I received and read my sons formal diagnose, a different type of reality existed from the one I was used to up to that moment. Without a doubt both my husband and I needed time to realize and comprehend the diversity of our son and that our expectations for our future suddenly changed drastically. Every parent wants their child to be healthy and happy, however such a diagnose came as a "tsunami" in my life, my husband's as well as to his brother's life.

I was not at all sure how I could help my child with autism and how could I know, since information and support from the doctors was almost nonexistent, and my emotional difficulties many. However, after many personal battles, internal isolation and finally asking for help from trusting friends, specialists and others I managed to see reality straight in the eye. I managed to fight, and still fight, with all my strength to create a better tomorrow for Fotis, and every other child around me, to alter my views of the world and my attitude to life... every day Fotis and his autism, teach me about the new worlds around us.

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## Educational Robotics and Autism Spectrum Disorders - Research data and educational practice

**Theodora Papazoglou** PhD, **Charalampos Karagiannidis**, Professor, University of Thessaly Department of Special Education, University of Thessaly, Volos, Greece

### Abstract

Educational Robotics (ER) are attracting increasing interest during the past decade, since they can promote 21<sup>st</sup> century skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and collaboration as well as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) concepts. This presentation focuses on educational activities and processes, as well as on research data regarding the use and impact of ER on students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in primary education inclusive contexts.

The Lego Wedo 2.0 robotic kit has been used in many studies and has resulted in improvements in performance and achievement of learning goals, especially due to increased student engagement. Moreover, it has been found that specific educational activities can have positive impact on the social status of students with ASD.

The presentation will discuss such educational activities, together with research results from Greece which demonstrate that ER programs can promote social skills, social status and social inclusion of students with ASD.

**Keywords:** Educational Robotics, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Social Status

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### What do we know about effectiveness of interventions on persons with autism spectrum?

**Oili Sauna-aho**, (Director of the development and expert services in Support and Expert Center for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities – Paimio, Turku, Finland)

#### Abstract

Children, adolescents and adults with autism spectrum disorders often have major challenges in daily life as well as difficulties in social interaction and learning. Challenging behaviour and psychiatric disorders are also common. There are several kinds of rehabilitation methods or interventions, though scientific evidence on their efficacy in this population is not strong. The data on the effectiveness of different interventions is presented, based on reviews and meta-analyses.

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### Physical activity and quality of life in individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and intellectual disability (ID)

**DimitraKoutsouki**, Professor, Laboratory of Adapted Physical Activity/ Developmental & Physical Disabilities, Faculty of Physical Education & Sport Science, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

#### Abstract

Individuals with autism and intellectual disability are at increased risk for developing health conditions such as obesity, hypertension, and diabetes in adulthood compared to the general population. An area of concern for the development of these health conditions is physical inactivity ([Croen et al., 2015](#)). Children and adolescents with autism are more likely to be overweight and be more physically inactive than typically developing adolescents ([McCoy and Morgan, 2020](#); [McCoy et al., 2016](#)). A highly prevalence of obesity in children and youths with disabilities might lead to serious health consequences such as cardiovascular disease and psychological issues (McMullen, 2014) due to decreased energy expenditure as result in decreased participation in physical activities, inappropriate eating habits and chronic diseases (Hickson et al., 2013; Tyler et al., 2011). Research results highlight the intercorrelated link between motor performance and cognitive development during childhood (Rakison& Woodward, 2008). Students with ASD exhibited improved cognitive, social, and behavioral skills after performing aerobic exercises (Neely et al., 2015).

The concept of quality of life is considered as another area relevant for public policy and the promotion of equal opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities ([Verdugo et al., 2012](#)). Components of quality of life include independence(personal development, self-determination), social participation (interpersonal relations, social inclusion, and human rights), and well-being (emotional, physical, and material well-being) ([Gómez et al., 2011](#); [Schalock et al., 2016](#)). A growing body of researchers takes an interest in investigating the positive effects of adapted physical exercise programs for individuals with developmental disabilities over the last decades (Strofylla et al., 2021; Young &Furgal, 2016; Healy et al, 2018). The active and regular participation in physical activity and exercise intervention programs has significant effects in improving motor proficiency, physical fitness, emotional and physical health, cognitive abilities, and social skills of individuals with ASD and ID.

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### **A perspective on emotional needs in people with autism spectrum disorder**

**ElsRonsse**, Psychologist, member of the EAMHID NEED-group and chair of SEN-SEO

#### **Abstract**

Supporting people with autism and intellectual often seems to focus on reducing sensory hyperreactivity and making context and other people's expectations predictable, often using a strong visualising framework. However, by using the emotional development framework in people with intellectual disability and autism, we see that we can also often support, based on their emotional needs.

From practice-based research, we offer insights into the emotional need we see in people with intellectual disability and autism.

We also reflect on their significance for diagnosis and support.

### **Specific cognitive dysfunctioning and vulnerability to specific psychopathology: a descriptive study on intellectual developmental disorder (intellectual disability)**

**Jacopo Santambrogio**, Psychiatrist, University of Milano-Bicocca Adele Bonolis AS.FRA. Foundation, Vedano al Lambro, Italy, Presidio Corberi, ASST Brianza, Limbiate, Italy

#### **Abstract**

Background:

Intellectual Developmental Disorder (IDD) is diagnosed with cognitive and adaptive behaviour evaluations. Psychiatric comorbidities are under-estimated, but as challenging behaviour is commonly present, over-medicated.

Relationship between specific cognitive dysfunctions and psychiatric vulnerability has still not been adequately studied.

Aims:

1) to reassess an IDD sample in cognitive profile, adaptive functioning, psychiatric comorbidities;

2) to investigate the correlation between specific cognitive dysfunctions and the presence of specific psychiatric symptoms in IDD.

120 individuals with IDD from 3 Italian residential facilities were consecutively evaluated and divided into two groups:

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a) with more intellectual resources, using WAIS-IV or Leiter-3scales, and a neuropsychological battery (TMT, Stroop and TOL); interviews with a professional caregiver (Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale-II, SPAIDD-G, and STA-DI) to evaluate adaptive behaviour, psychiatric comorbidities, ASD.

b) individuals with more severe IDD: professional caregiver assessment.

### Results:

90 males, 30 females, mean age 57. IDD diagnoses: borderline 3%, mild 16%, moderate 11%, moderate-severe 4%, severe 59%.

11% comorbid ASD diagnosis; with diagnostic ASD re-assessment (STA-DI) increasing to 29%. 38% challenging behaviour; 89% physical comorbidities, 58% psychiatric comorbidities. There-assessment for psychiatric comorbidities (SPAIDD-G) identified a significant number of disorders and despite the medical records showed a low prevalence of psychiatric diagnoses, a consistent quantity of psychotropic drugs had been prescribed. Pearson correlations between cognitive tests and psychopathological items present significant findings.

### Discussion and Conclusions:

SPAIDD-G evaluations revealed a greater psychopathology presence than previously reported. This finding supports the importance of using screening tools to improve the diagnostic process, which would improve the psychopharmacological therapies. The SPAIDD-G tool could have revealed the real prevalence of psychopathology, not adequately recognized in clinical routine and/or misinterpreted as challenging behaviour.

The study of specific cognitive dysfunctions underlying psychiatric disorders may provide the basis for a paradigm shift from "intellectually below average IQ" to "neuropsychological characterization".

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## Virtual interactive environments and desktop touchscreens: their contribution to the teaching of co-operative skills to children with autism

**Grammatiki Kalamoti**, Primary School Teacher, MSc, **Christine Syriopoulou- Delli**, Associate Professor University of Macedonia, Laboratory of Developmental Disabilities, Autism

### Abstract

The positive effects of technology in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have been proven by numerous studies. In recent years, the use of technology in interventions for children with ASD has increased. Taking this in consideration, this literature review aims to identify the effectiveness of desktop touchscreens and virtual interaction environments in enhancing collaboration skills in children with autism. The research articles included in this paper used the specific means of technology, in combination with various software applications, to teach and practice collaborative and communication skills. Through the literature review, it is expected to provide answers to research questions concerning the effectiveness of these technological tools and the conditions under which collaboration is facilitated and collaborative skills are enhanced. As a main conclusion, this work highlights the positive impact of desktop touchscreens and virtual interaction environments on the cooperative behavior of children with ASD. Unfortunately, in Greece the use of such technological tools in the educational process of children with autism is not well established and relatively uncommon since most public schools lack the proper infrastructure. Use of such tools is fragmented and depends heavily on the individual effort of each teacher/school to obtain and introduce them in the classroom. This paper, by showcasing the positive effects of these technological tools, aims to illustrate the need for their mainstream inclusion.

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## The role of KEDASY in supporting the students with intellectual disability and autism

**PetrosStagiopoulos**, PhD in Special Education, Supervisor in 1<sup>st</sup> KEDASY of East Thessaloniki

### Abstract

The jurisdictions exerted by the Interdisciplinary Evaluation, Consulting & Support Centers (KEDASY) for achieving their mission in educational orientation are:

- Researching and assessing educational, psychological and social needs as well as other obstacles in learning and the equal access in education that are faced by students in school communities, including students with intellectual disabilities, autism, special needs or with lower socioeconomic status
- Supporting the efforts of school units
- Providing consulting and support to school units' teachers
- Consulting and supporting parents and guardians of students about matters in school learning, study planning and cooperation with school units

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### **The mentalizing skills and stress regulation of persons with an intellectual disability with and without Autism and the serious game 'You and I'**

**Paula Sterkenburg**, Professor, Suzanne Derks, PhD candidate, Agnes Willemen, Associate Professor (Lab Social relations and attachment) VrijeUniversiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

#### **Abstract**

To assess the mentalizing skills of persons with a mild to borderline intellectual disabilities (MBID) a self-report instrument, the Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (RFQ) was translated and adapted. The reliability and validity of the RFQ with its added items referring to 'mentalizing about the self and the other' were examined (Derks et al., submitted). This adapted RFQ was then used to examine the efficacy of the serious game 'You and I'. 'You and I' is a computer game developed in co-creation. Its main goals were to support the learning of new skills in coping with stress and mentalizing. In an RCT study 159 adults with MBID completed the Dutch and easy-to-read RFQ and performance-based instruments (perspective taking, emotion recognition, and theory of mind) and personal variables (autistic traits) were assessed. In this presentation will aim to answer the following research questions: Are there differences in the mentalizing skills and in stress regulation of persons with MBID with and without Autism? What is the effect of the serious game 'You and I' for persons with MBID with and without Autism?

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### **Schizophrenia in autistic adults with intellectual disabilities. Diagnostic assessment and interventions. Results from a nation-wide multicenter study in Norway 2010 – 2020.**

**Trine Lise Bakken**, Head of Development and Research, NAMHID, Oslo University Hospital, Oslo, Norway, Division of Mental Health and Addiction, Norwegian Advisory Unit for Mental Health in Intellectual Disability, NAMHID

#### **Abstract**

**Background:** This study aimed to explore symptom recognition and assessment of schizophrenia, and interventions used for autistic patients with intellectual disabilities (ID).

**Methods:** The study used data from a Norwegian multi-centre study on the co-occurrence of ASD, ID, and mental disorders, and included 183 participants aged 14–68 year; 56 female, 127 male. 119 had mild/moderate ID and 64 severe/profound ID. The 26 participants diagnosed with schizophrenia constituted the study group, and the remaining participants constituted two comparison groups. The assessment included symptom reports, clinical diagnosis, and scores on two checklists (Psychopathology in Autism Checklist, PAC, and Aberrant Behaviour Checklist, ABC). Interventions included psychopharmacological treatment for all 26 participants. 23 were admitted in inpatient units, and hence were provided symptom sensitive mental health nursing. Other psychosocial interventions included family interventions, and follow up community services, counselling service providers.

**Results:** Reported symptoms of schizophrenia in the present sample met the formal diagnostic criteria. For PAC/ABC scales, only PAC psychosis differed for the schizophrenia group compared to the group with no diagnosed mental disorder, and the group diagnosed with other mental disorders. Among participants with schizophrenia, two were diagnosed with other mental disorders, and elevated scores for anxiety and depression were common.

**Conclusions:** Emphasising core symptoms seems necessary when assessing co-occurring schizophrenia in autistic people with intellectual disabilities. The PAC may serve as a helpful screening tool. Interventions provided for the 26 participants were equal to interventions used in the general population.

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### Working to deliver a National autism strategy for health services - experience from the NHS England Autism Programme

**Dr. Roger Banks**, National Clinical Director for Learning Disability and Autism, NHS England

#### Abstract

The National Health Service Long Term Plan for England, published in early 2019, said there should be a clearer focus on the needs of autistic people and their families. As a result, the NHS England National Autism Team was established in June 2020 to champion the needs and aspirations of autistic children, young people and adults, and to oversee autism related commitments as set out in the NHS Long Term Plan. The team's plans include:

- reducing waiting times for autism diagnostic assessments
- improving the quality of autism diagnostic pathways including pre and post diagnostic support
- developing and piloting an autism specific health check
- making sure health services make the reasonable adjustments autistic people need
- Building on existing work to stop the overmedication of autistic people
- working with wider NHS England partners to support, autistic people who have complex needs to have access to a personal health budget
- supporting the Children and Young People Team, in making sure autistic children who have the most complex needs have a designated keyworker
- supporting local providers to reduce avoidable admissions to mental health hospitals
- supporting local providers to plan good quality mental health inpatient services that reduce length of stay, provide person-centred care and are as close to home as possible
- raising awareness of the importance of employing autistic people, and promoting the NHS as a good place of work

The presentation will focus on issues for clinicians irrespective of the health and social care systems in which they work.

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### Play and technological tools to enhance skills in preschool children with ASD

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#### Abstract

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is characterized by difficulties in social interaction and communication, as well as restrictive and repetitive patterns of behavior. More specifically, difficulties in social interaction and communication include reduced eye contact, deficits in facial expressions, and spontaneous social beginnings. In addition, individuals with ASD find it difficult to understand other people's emotions, but also to express their own. The combination of the behaviors mentioned above is necessary to achieve complex social behaviors, such as initiating and maintaining an interactive process and choosing an appropriate topic for discussion. Considering the necessity of these behaviors for the development of children, the importance of their enhancement is understood. Play can act as a tool in the hands of parents to teach new skills to their children. It can also allow young children to discover their environment and relationships with family members. In the presentation that will follow, reference to the use of play as well as activities and appropriate games based on the age and the corresponding developmental level of children will be made. Furthermore, interventions through play in children with ASD will be mentioned. Then serious games and technological tools, which can be used by parents to promote children's social, communication, play, and daily life skills, will be presented. Finally, the contribution of technology to enhancing the cognitive skills of children with ASD will be highlighted.

### Parent Counseling and other Interventions to Support Parents of Pre-school Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

# BEST. AND DEVELOPING PRACTICE IN SUPPORTING THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND AUTISM

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## Abstract

Parents of children with a recently ASD diagnosis face elevated distress and mental health problems like stress, depression, and anxiety. Lately, parent counseling and other interventions, such as parenting schools, which target directly parents' of preschool children well-being have been implemented in some researches. These interventions are training programs aimed at parents or parents-to-be or any person who has undertaken the care and education of the child. The objective of this review is to find out the different types of interventions that have been used and the outcomes on parental well-being enhancement. Searching on five databases and following a range of search strategies, a total of 11 studies met inclusion criteria. Findings suggest that in most cases, any type of intervention and especially parent counseling, leads to positive effects on parents' distress and well-being. Certainly, more studies have to focus on the parents' of preschool children with ASD well-being and take into consideration all the limitations of the studies that are reviewed in this paper. Despite this fact, it is very encouraging that more and more researchers and clinicians are concerned about these kinds of interventions in order families with a child with ASD to get supported appropriately.

## Parents and Siblings of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Literature Review

# BEST. AND DEVELOPING PRACTICE IN SUPPORTING THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND AUTISM

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## Abstract

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder, with deficits in social communication and social interaction. It is a life-long condition, as a result the presence of the children with ASD has an impact on the members of their immediate family, in both negative and positive ways. The professionals contact everyday with families of children, where the goal of their intervention is the child with ASD. The context-family, parents and siblings does not always receive the necessary attention and the appropriate support.

For this presence literature review were used representative studies- mainly from 2015 until 2022 - in order to study the psychosocial adjustment of the parents and the typically developing (TD) siblings of children with ASD. Also, the family, the sibling relationship and the support of both of them have been studied. In conclusion, the family faces problems, restrictions and responsibilities.