

Clinical Characteristics of Autistic children Receiving Care in Rehabilitation Centers in Sana'a City, Yemen

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Abstract : Background: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex developmental challenge characterized by significant impairments in social interaction, communication, and behavioral patterns. Diagnosing ASD is challenging due to the lack of definitive medical tests, making early identification crucial. Therefore, increasing people's awareness about autism leads to early diagnosis and better prognosis. Objective: Our study aims to identify the initial symptoms prompting families to seek medical advice, determine the timeline between symptom onset and formal diagnosis, and explore methods for assessing the severity of ASD. Subjects and Methods: The study design employed was a descriptive cross-sectional design, which was suitable for the nature of the research. The data collection took place from March 5, 2022, to April 5, 2022, in Autism Rehabilitation Centers in Sana'a, Yemen. The study population consisted of all children who were diagnosed with autism and visited Autism rehabilitation centers in Sana'a city. The sample size was determined using Epi info version 7, and a total population of 587 autistic children attending the treatment was calculated, but only 250 children were included in this study (176 were male vs. 74 female). Result: In terms of sociability problems, it was found that a significant proportion of Yemeni children with autism experienced difficulties in this area. Specifically, 39.6% were classified as having severe sociability problems, while 28.4% were classified as having moderate issues. Sensory-cognitive awareness problems were also prevalent among the respondents, with 29.6% exhibiting severe difficulties in this domain. Health and physical problems were identified as significant concerns for Yemeni children with autism. The results indicated that 38.4% of the participants experienced severe health and physical issues. Identifying the first symptoms of autism is crucial for early detection and intervention. According to the study, speech delay was the most commonly observed first abnormality, reported by 71.3% of parents. Communication difficulties with others were the second most noticed abnormality, reported by 54.9% of parents. Repetitive movements were the third most commonly observed abnormality, reported by 18% of parents. Regarding the awareness among parents of ASD, our study showed that a significant portion (62%) of parents lack awareness about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and its causes. Surprisingly, a majority of these parents (over 80%) believe that autism is a curable condition. Additionally, more than half (51.2%) of the parents surveyed reported insufficient knowledge about medication options available to support therapy and rehabilitation for their autistic children.

Keywords : autism characteristics, rehabilitation centres, yemen, children

Conference Title : ICA 2024 : International Conference on Autism

Conference Location : Berlin, Germany

Conference Dates : July 22-23, 2024