

Management of ASD with Co-Morbid OCD: A Literature Review to Compare the Pharmacological and Psychological Treatment Options in Individuals Under the Age of 18

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Abstract : There is a significant overlap between autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), with up to 90% of young people diagnosed with ASD having this co-morbidity. Distinguishing between the symptoms of the two leads to issues with accurate treatment, yet this is paramount in benefitting the young person. There are two distinct methods of treatment, psychological or pharmacological, with clinicians tending to choose one or the other, potentially due to the lack of research available. This report reviews the efficacy of psychological and pharmacological treatments for young people diagnosed with ASD and co-morbid OCD. A literature review was performed on papers from the last fifteen years, including "ASD," "OCD," and individuals under the age of 18. Eleven papers were selected as relevant. The report looks at the comparison between more traditional methods, such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI) and cognitive behavior therapy (CBT), and newer therapies, such as modified or intensive ASD-focused psychotherapies and the use of other medication classes. On reviewing the data, it was identified that there was a distinct lack of information on this important topic. The most widely used treatment was medication such as Fluoxetine, an SSRI, which rarely showed an improvement in symptoms or outcomes. This is in contrast to modified forms of CBT, which often reduces symptoms or even results in OCD remission. With increased research into the non-traditional management of these co-morbid conditions, it is clear there is scope that modified CBT may become the future treatment of choice for OCD in young people with ASD.

Keywords : autism spectrum disorder, intensive or adapted cognitive behavioral therapy, obsessive compulsive disorder, pharmacological management

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