

AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER: CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS, EARLY DIAGNOSIS AND THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PEDIATRICIAN DOCTOR

Luizabele Pereira Godinho

Centro Universitário Vértice – Univértix
Matipó – Minas Gerais

Nathalia Aparecida de Freitas Domingos

Centro Universitário Vértice – Univértix
Matipó – Minas Gerais

All content in this magazine is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution License. Attribution-Non-Commercial-Non-Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).



Abstract: **INTRODUCTION:** Autism Spectrum Disorder is defined as an atypical neurodevelopmental disorder. It presents manifestations that imply persistent deficits in communication and behavior, which reflect on difficulties in social interaction. **OBJECTIVE:** To identify the manifestations of the disease, which help in early diagnosis, and the importance of the pediatrician in this process. **METHODOLOGY:** Systematic literature review, qualitative, pure nature, covering reading and analysis of articles available on the Google Scholar metasearch engine. 12 articles were selected, 4 were excluded and 8 were chosen as references. **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:** The pediatrician, together with the family, must be aware of the typical signs of impaired development and social communication in the first years of life, facilitating early diagnosis, being able to intervene in advance and ensuring better conditions for living with the disorder. **CONCLUSION:** The diagnosis is predominantly clinical, requiring attention from health professionals. Multidisciplinary therapy is important for improving behavior and quality of life.

Keywords: Autism; Early diagnosis; Clinical manifestations; Pediatrics.

INTRODUCTION

According to Souza et al. (2020), autism would be defined as a behavioral syndrome, present from the early stages of life, characterized by a deficiency in social interaction, language, communication and activities. Currently called autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or, in English, "autism spectrum disorder" (ASD).

ASD encompasses disorders previously called early infantile autism, infantile autism, Kanner's autism, self-functioning autism, atypical autism, global disorder developmental disorder not otherwise specified, childhood

disintegrative disorder and Asperger's disorder (SIQUEIRA; PRAZERES; MAIA, 2020). In general, autistic people present stereotypical behavior or sensory difficulties: audible, tactile, texture, taste of food, which can lead to food selectivity (GADBEN et al., 2022). Furthermore, they have great difficulty tolerating stimuli such as music, noise, new experiences or environments (SOUZA et al., 2020).

According to the Brazilian Association of Pediatrics, early intervention is a set of therapeutic modalities that aim to increase the child's potential for social and communication development, protect intellectual functioning, reduce damage, improve quality of life and direct skills towards autonomy. The sooner you diagnose and start treatment, the sooner there will be a possibility of gains in quality of life (MERCADO, 2022).

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this review is to identify the clinical manifestations present in autism spectrum disorder that help in early diagnosis and the role of pediatricians in this context, considering the benefits that encouraging early interventions entails in the development of skills when monitored from childhood.

METHODOLOGY

This is a systematic literature review, with a qualitative approach, pure in nature, covering the reading, analysis and interpretation of articles present in the Google Scholar metasearch engine. The selected articles have a database from the following sources: Magazine: ``Residência Pediátrica``; Research, Society and Development; Ânima University Repository; Brazilian Society of Pediatrics; Revista Disciplinarum Scientia. 3,970 works related to the topic were found on the platform, between 2018 and 2023, 12 were chosen for full reading, 4 were excluded

and 8 were selected as references. It must be noted that the search was carried out using the following descriptors: “autism”; “early diagnosis”; “pediatrics”. The data was researched in March 2023, with the help of the descriptors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

ASD is a persistent condition with no cure, its symptoms become more pronounced over time, awakening its perception (RABELO; SMEHA, 2018). De Sousa et al. (2022) states that one in every 150 children is born with autism, which is four times more prevalent in boys than in girls. Due to daily contact with children, it is parents who usually notice the first signs (SIQUEIRA; PRAZERES; MAIA, 2020). The first suspicions arise in the baby's social behavior and language delays; however, investigations depend on the perception of doctors, mostly pediatricians. They are the ones who receive the complaint or who suspect that the baby's development is not going well (RABELO; SMEHA, 2018).

The training of pediatricians requires specific and essential training for the ASD clinic or, at least, for monitoring early childhood. The challenges that make clinical early interventions with ASD difficult or impossible point to interdisciplinary work, with speech therapists, psychologists, psychopedagogues, neuropsychiatrists, among others (RABELO; SMEHA, 2018). Therefore, these professionals will contribute not only to the treatment of the condition, but also to the identification of the child's medical, cognitive and adaptive profile (CAMPOS et al., 2021).

To facilitate early screening, screening questionnaires have been developed. One of the most used is the Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT). This scale presents an excellent instrument to be included in the pediatric routine, being recommended by the Brazilian Society of Pediatrics (SBP),

as it can be applied to all children during pediatric visits, including those who do not present symptoms, but have a risk factor for the disorder (SIQUEIRA; PRAZERES; MAIA, 2020).

The pediatrician must remain alert to warning signs of impairment in development and social communication in the first years of life: Absence of vocalization at 6 months of age; Absence of babbling of syllables with consonants at 12 months of age; Absence of communication through gestures at 12 months of age; for example, the child does not point to a desired object or look at another person's index finger; Speech does not include simple words, other than “mommy” and “daddy”, spoken spontaneously at 16 months of age; Speech does not include sentences of two words at 24 months of age or of three or more words at 36 months; Regression or stagnation of developmental milestones, based on the loss of verbal and non-verbal communication skills (SOUZA et al., 2020).

Autism can be classified into 3 levels: Mild autism (level 1), requires less support, characterized by delayed language development, little/no direct eye contact, changes in speech intonation; attachment to an object or persistent interest in a subject, difficulty changing routine, not answering when called; Moderate autism (level 2), requires greater support in certain activities, characterized by more behavioral changes, such as aggression - at this stage, IQ below 70 is taken into account; Severe autism (level 3), need support in daily activities, characterized by peculiar occurrences, not having autonomy to eat, go to the bathroom and other hygiene habits and, among others, violent crises, situations of social shame, inappropriate behaviors may occur and self-harm (MERCADO, 2022).

In this context, there is no specific standard treatment. In general, treatment

is usually personalized, in accordance with the needs and progress of each child, with interventions analyzed individually, case by case (MERCADO, 2022). The sooner it is diagnosed, there is a greater chance of developments in communication skills and the neurological system, which contribute to the child's integral development (SILVA et al., 2022). However, if there is a delay in diagnosis and initiation of necessary therapies, the symptoms will become more consolidated, harming cognitive and psychosocial development (GADBEN et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

Through this systematic literature review, it is possible to understand the clinical manifestations of autism and the importance of early detection of these symptoms, since its diagnosis is predominantly clinical, requiring extreme attention from health professionals, especially the pediatrician together with the family. It is essential to introduce multidisciplinary therapy, starting according to the diagnosis and need, given the benefit and significant improvement in the behavior and quality of life of these patients.

REFERENCES

CAMPOS, Thalita Ferreira *et al.* **Análise da importância da qualificação dos profissionais de saúde para o manejo do Transtorno de Espectro Autista (TEA).** Research, Society and Development, v. 10, n. 6, p. e32910615667-e32910615667, 2021. Disponível em: <https://rsdjournal.org/index.php/rsd/article/view/15667>. Acesso em: 2 mar. 2023.

DE SOUSA, Desirée Mata *et al.* **Desafios no diagnóstico precoce do Transtorno do Espectro Autista.** Research, Society and Development, v. 11, n. 8, p. e5611829837-e5611829837, 2022. Disponível em: <https://rsdjournal.org/index.php/rsd/article/view/29837>. Acesso em: 4 mar. 2023.

GADBEM, Sofia Kirsten *et al.* **Percepções dos profissionais da saúde sobre o diagnóstico precoce e habilidades comunicacionais e relacionais no cuidado da criança com Transtorno do Espectro Autista.** Research, Society and Development, v. 11, n. 12, p. e504111234831-e504111234831, 2022. Disponível em: <https://rsdjournal.org/index.php/rsd/article/view/34831>. Acesso em: 3 mar. 2023.

MERCADO, Waldiléia Iriarte. **TEA–Diagnóstico precoce com reflexos na qualidade de vida da criança e da família.** Research, Society and Development, v. 11, n. 15, p. e544111537482-e544111537482, 2022. Disponível em: <https://rsdjournal.org/index.php/rsd/article/view/37482>. Acesso em: 1 mar. 2023.

RABELO, Inês Farias; SMEHA, Luciane Najar. **A identificação precoce dos sinais de risco para o transtorno do espectro autista e as intervenções antecipadas: um encontro necessário.** Disciplinarum Scientia| Ciências Humanas, v. 19, n. 2, p. 247-259, 2018. Disponível em: <https://periodicos.ufn.edu.br/index.php/disciplinarumCH/article/view/2926>. Acesso em: 6 mar. 2023.

SILVA, Emanuelle *et al.* **O papel do diagnóstico precoce de TEA em crianças para o desenvolvimento escolar,** 2022. Disponível em: <https://repositorio.animaeducacao.com.br/handle/ANIMA/29283>. Acesso em: 4 mar. 2023.

SIQUEIRA, Bianca Nayara Leite; PRAZERES, Áurea Christina de Lima Ferreira; MAIA, Allyssandra Maria Lima Rodrigues. **Os desafios do transtorno do espectro autista: da suspeita ao diagnóstico.** Residência Pediátrica, Rio Grande do Norte, v. 0, n. 339, 2020. Disponível em: <https://cdn.publisher.gn1.link/residenciapediatrica.com.br/pdf/v12n2aop339.pdf>. Acesso em: 7 mar 2023.

SOUZA, Nathalye Emanuelle *et al.* **O papel do pediatra no reconhecimento precoce dos sinais e sintomas do transtorno do espectro autista: revisão de literatura,** 2020. Disponível em: <https://cdn.publisher.gn1.link/residenciapediatrica.com.br/pdf/v11n3aop234.pdf>. Acesso em: 1 mar. 2023.