

Management of Asperger's

Brian Bushart MS and Martha Rich RN, ANP
Keuka College

History

- Identified in 1944 by Hans Asperger
- Labeled “autistic psychopathy”
- Rate is approximately 4-7/1000

Definition

- Asperger's is a wide spectrum of disabilities with many different levels of severity.

Hallmarks

- Impoverished social skills
- Obsession with a certain area of interest
- Rigid and inflexible
- A “Black and White” view of the world
- Intelligence remains intact

Cause

- Unknown, but there are theories
 - Genetic
 - tends to run in families, but no gene has been identified
 - males > females
 - Environmental
 - Combination of the two

Multiple brain structures involved

- Limbic system: emotions, “Fight or Flight”
- Corpus Callosum: connection of the hemispheres of the brain
- Hypothalamus: emotions
- Reticular Formation: information screening
- Thalamus: relay station for messages
- Amygdala: emotions of fear and aggression
- Facial images are processed in an area usually used for perceiving inanimate objects
- 10% larger brain
- Ability islands separated by areas of inability

Prevention

- None yet identified

Core Group of Behaviors

- Abnormal eye contact
- Aloofness
- Failure to turn when called by name
- Failure to use gestures to point or show
- Lack of interactive play
- Lack of interest in peers

Symptoms

- Over focused or obsessed on a single topic, ignoring all others.
- Difficulty socially
- Many with above average intelligence
- No cognitive delay
- No impairment of ADL's
- Do not withdraw from the world

Symptoms continued

- May show delays in motor development
- May show unusual physical behavior
- Are not flexible with schedules and routines
- Do not express pleasure at others happiness
- Speech and language difficulties in social situations lead to isolation

Treatment

- No single best treatment
- Teach skills
- Psychosocial interventions
- Psychopharmacological interventions

Childhood therapeutic strategies

- What therapy was done in childhood
 - Relation based (DIR)
 - Applied behavioral analysis (ABA)
 - Social stories (Carol Gray)
 - Relationship development (RDI)

Psychosocial Interventions

- Cognitive behavior
- Psychotherapy
- Parent education and training
- Physical or occupational therapy
- Social skills training
- Speech and language therapy

Behavioral Approaches

- Limit setting
 - i.e. 3 question rule
- Emphasize ability
- Choose your battles
- Stimulus change associate something you wear with making choices
- Social norms

Coexisting conditions

- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Social anxiety disorder
- Bipolar disorder
- Depression
- Nonverbal learning disorder
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder

Psychopharmacological Interventions

- ADHD and the hyperactivity, inattention and impulsivity
 - Psychostimulents
 - Clonadine
 - Tricyclic antidepressants
 - Strattera
- For anxiety
 - SSRI's
 - Tricyclic antidepressants

Psychopharmacological Interventions

- For irritability and aggression
 - Mood stabilizers
 - Beta blockers
 - Clonidine
 - Naltrexone
 - Neuroleptics
- For preoccupations, compulsions and rituals
 - SSRI's
 - Tricyclic antidepressants

What Can We Do

- Teaching for faculty, staff and peers
- Social norms-teach acceptance
- Housing-create mini culture, single room
- Peer mentors
- Contract

What Can We Do

- Counseling
- Safety net
- Academic support- use alternative learning styles
- Clubs of interest
- Developmental disabilities awareness-let them help



Questions/discussion/sharing

Resources

- Asperger Foundation International www.aspfi.org
- Asperger Syndrome and High Functioning Autism Assoc. <http://www.ahany.org>
- Asperger Syndrome Education Network <http://www.aspennj.org>
- Autism Society Of America (A.S.A.) <http://www.autism-society.org>
- Global and Regional Asperger's Syndrome Partnership <http://www.grasp.org>

- National Alliance for Autism Research (U.S.)
<http://www.naar.org>
- N.Y.U. Child Study Center – Asperger Institute
<http://www.aboutourkids.org/aboutus/programs/asperger.html>
- Online Aspergers Syndrome Information and Support
<http://www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/>

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- Federal level Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD)

www.omr.state.ny.us

- State level Developmental Disabilities Services Offices (DDSO)

www.ddso.org

- Local level: The ARC

www.thearc.org

RESEARCH INFORMATION

- An Introduction to clinical trials from the National Institutes of Health
<http://clinicaltrials.gov/ct/gui/c/w2r>
- M.I.N.D. INSTITUTE (Medical Investigation of Neurodevelopmental Disorders)
<http://mindinstitute.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/index.htm>
- National Alliance for Autism Research (NAAR)
<http://www.naar.org>
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Autism Site
<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/autism/>
- Organization for Autism Research(OAR)
<http://www.researchautism.org>
- The Autism Research Foundation (TARF)
<http://ladders.org/tarf/index.htm>

- Brian Bushart, MS:
 - bbushart@keuka.edu
- Martha Rich, ANP:
 - mrich@keuka.edu