Words are not enough: Social Communication & Early Signs of Autism Spectrum Disorders

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TODAY

• What is Autism Spectrum Disorder
• Early Identification
  ▫ Social development in infants
  ▫ Foundation for social communication
  ▫ Why words are not enough
Autism Spectrum Disorders

- Autistic Disorder
- Asperger’s Disorder
- Childhood Disintegrative Disorder
- Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified
Core Deficits

• Social Communication & Interactions
  • Nonverbal & verbal communication for social interaction
  • Lack of social reciprocity

• Restricted Repertoire of Interests & Activities
Current Prevalence Estimates

- 1 in 91 children
  - American Academy of Pediatrics
- 1 in 100 children
  - Center for Disease Control
Reasons for Increase in Prevalence

• Unidentified environmental, genetic &/or epigenetic factors
• Change in diagnostic criteria
• Diagnostic substitution
• Increased awareness
TEXAS

Texas Children Under 21 With Autism Spectrum Disorders
By Health and Human Services Region

(Estimated Statewide Total in 2008 = 50,100)

Children With Autism
By HHS Region

- 10,000 - 13,600
- 5,000 - 9,999
- 1,500 - 4,999
- Less than 1,500

Prevalence Rate = 1 in 150 (CDC)

Source: Demography 2018 Team
Strategic Decision Support
Texas Health and Human Services Commission
July 16, 2008
Learn the signs Act Early!!

Early Identification ➔ Early Diagnosis ➔ Early Services ➔ Better Outcomes

Reliable diagnosis 18-24 months
What are the early signs??

- Social Communication Impairment prominent
- Restricted Repertoire of Activities & Interests may not yet be evident
Early Social Development

2 mo
Sharing Emotion

6-9 mo
Pursuing Goals

12 mo
Sharing Intention
Sharing Emotion

- Social smile
- Social responsiveness
- Face-to-face (dyadic) interaction
Proto-conversations

- Reciprocal exchanges of emotions
- Turn-taking sequences
  - Rhythmic, balanced
- Mutual gazing
- Responds to vocalization & facial expressions
6-9 months: Interaction shifts

dyadic to triadic
Sharing Perception & Pursuing Goals

- **Goal directed**
  - Selective attention to goal
  - Persist until goal is met
  - Happy when goal is met

- **Understand other’s goals**
  - Follows adult’s line of regard
  - Predict what comes next
Sharing Attention & Intention

- Mutual knowledge that they are doing something together
- Coordinate their plans & help each other
9-12 mos: Infant begins to communicate

- **Social Routines**
  - Wave bye bye, peek-a-boo
- **Share Attention**
  - Show
- **Direct Attention**
  - Point
- **Behavior Regulation**
  - Request, protest
COMMUNICATION

PURSUING GOALS

Request & Protest

SHARED INTENTION

Share & Direct Attention
COMMUNICATION

PURSUING GOALS

Isolated words

SHARED INTENTION

True rule governed language
Early indicators of ASD

- No warm, joyful engagement by 5 months
- No two-way, back-&-forth gesturing, smiles or social-emotional reciprocity by 9 months
- By 12 months
  - Limited use of communicative gestures (words)
    - Showing
    - Waving
    - Pointing
    - Sharing Attention
- Limited use of back and forth interactions (peek-a-boo)
- Does not follow adults gaze or point
- Does not respond to name
- ANY loss of ANY language or babbling or social skills
Resources if you are concerned

- Talk to your doctor or nurse and ask for a referral to a developmental pediatrician or other specialist
- Contact your local early intervention agency (for children under 3)
- Contact your local public school (if 3 and older)

- Check out The ACT Early website
  http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html
Contact

- **The Center for Children and Family’s Infant Development Program**
  [http://infantdp.utdallas.edu/](http://infantdp.utdallas.edu/)
  - Offers developmental screenings for infants and toddlers
    - Make sure you mention that you are concerned about ASD.
    - Contact Emily Touchstone at 972-883-4827 [etouchstone@utdallas.edu](mailto:etouchstone@utdallas.edu)

- **The Chrystal Charity Ball Autism Project’s Coordinated Referral Services**
  - A centralized phone number for direct access coordinated autism related services, provides educational information, referral information, and access to on-line and community resources for families and children with ASD.
    - Call 214-456-7700

- **The Callier Center for Communicative Disorders**
  - Provides individual, group and classroom-based social communication therapy and parent training by certified speech/language pathologists
    - Call the Dallas location at 214-905-3000
    - Call the Richardson location at 972-883-3630