

Autism Spectrum Disorder – Types, Severity Assessment And Homoeopathic Approach

S. Kiruthiga^{1*}, Bhavya Shikha², Vinay Kumar³, Endresh Kumar⁴

¹*MD (Hom), Ph.D (Hom.) Scholar, Tantia University, Sri Ganganagar (Raj.)

²MD (Hom), Research Supervisor, Associate Professor, Dept. of Paediatrics.

³MD (Hom.) Ph.D (Hom), Associate Professor, Dept. of Materia Medica, Faculty of Homoeopathy, Tantia University, Sri Ganganagar (Raj.)

⁴MD (Hom.), Associate Professor, Dept. of Practice of Medicine, PG department, SS Agarwal Homoeopathic Medical college, Navasri, Gujarat.

***Corresponding author:** Dr.S.Kiruthiga, M.D.(Hom)

*Email – kiruthiga.dr@gmail.com, Ph. – 9047248438

ABSTRACT

Autism also called as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), is a complex developmental disorder that affects children in behaviour, interaction, communication and learning. These children also have problems in social interactions. They remain isolated and absorbed in their world. Most of them are indulged in repetitive behaviour which leads to poor attention and poor concentration and thereby preventing them to learn social skills, even day to day activities.

Autism appears before the age 3 and persists throughout a person's life. It is called as a spectrum disorder, as because it produces different set of symptoms in different ways and in varying degrees. ASD usually produces a group of symptoms which represent the involvement of various areas of life such as communication, learning, understanding and behaviour. Current treatment method includes therapies, supplements and symptomatic medications. There is no therapeutic mode available to reverse the children from autism label. Holistic approach is necessary to bring back the harmony in autism children.

Keywords: Homoeopathy & Autism, Holistic approach, ASD

INTRODUCTION

It is very difficult for the autism children to understand the thoughts and emotions of others with difficulties in expressing their own emotions and thoughts. It is very hard for them to express themselves, with words, through gestures, facial expressions, and touch. Due this lack of subjective symptoms treatment of the autism children is very challenging.

Some of the children may be unusually good at art, music, math, or things that involve memory with good problem solving skills. Most of the Autism children have difficulty in handling sensory stimulus such as sound, lights, clothes, or temperature. The recent rise in autism cases can be considered as a result of increasing awareness and better diagnostic tools.

Global scenario:

The prevalence of ASD was 27.6 per 1,000 (one in 36) children aged 8 years and was 3.8 times as prevalent among boys as among girls (43.0 versus 11.4). One in 36 children aged 8 years (approximately 4% of boys and 1% of girls) was estimated to have ASD. These estimates are higher than previous ADDM Network estimates during 2000–2018. The continued increase among children identified with ASD, highlights the need for enhanced infrastructure to provide equitable diagnostic, treatment, and support services for all children with ASD [1].

Risk Factors for Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Children born to elderly parents
- Male gender, as autism is more common in male child than girl child (4:1)
- Family history of Autism
- Existing genetic conditions such as fragile X, Rett, and Down syndromes
- Very low birth weight [2]

Types of Autism

1. Autism Disorder – it is also known as childhood autism, Infantile autism, Konner's syndrome. It refers to problem with social interaction, communication and imaginative play in children below 3years. It also includes a range of nonspecific problems such as phobias, temper tantrums and self directed aggression with sleep and eating disturbances.
2. Asperger's syndrome (AD) – there will be no delay or retardation in language or cognitive development. It is associated with marked clumsiness and psychotic tendencies. They feel and act awkward in social settings. They speak a lot about single topic and are resistant to change. They show few emotions and difficulty in understanding facial expressions [2]
3. Pervasive Development Disorder (PDD) – it is also known as Atypical Autism. This disorder occurs during infancy where milestones are not met with the age. The typical age of onset is 3years of age. Symptoms includes problems with using and understanding the language, difficulty relating to people, objects and events, repetitive body movements or behaviour pattern [3]
4. Childhood Disintegrative Disorder (CDD) – also known as Heller's syndrome and disintegrative psychosis. Children with CDD have minimum 2years of normal development in all areas such as speech, language understanding and social development. This is lost usually between ages 3 and 4 but it can happen anytime upto age 10yrs.

All the four types are together called as Autism Spectrum Disorder in 2013 as mentioned in DSM – V criteria.

Autism symptoms in children

- Not responding to name call by 9 months old
- Not showing facial expressions by 9 months old
- Do not play simple games by 12 months old
- Difficulty in using gestures (like waving hello) by 12 months old
- Difficulty in understanding the emotion of other people by 24 months old
- Not showing interest in playing with children of same age group by 36 months old
- Lines up toys in a specific order and arranging them again and again, also become upset if the order is changed.
- Shows obsessive interests with certain objects such as sticks, thread etc.
- Rocks their body, flaps their hands, or spins in circles
- Delayed language, movement, learning, or cognitive skills
- Odd sleeping and eating habits, do not touch the sticky foods.

Signs of autism

- Difficult to get eye contact
- Doing something over and over, like repeating words or phrases, rocking back and forth, or fidgeting with objects (such as flipping a light switch)
- High sensitivity to sounds, touches, smells, or sights that seem ordinary to other people
- Do not look at or listening to other people
- Difficulty in pointing things
- Do not permit others to hold them or cuddled
- Talking in robotic voice
- Uneasiness to changes in routine.

Autism children may also have seizures. But it usually starts around adolescence.

- Trouble understanding what other people are thinking or feeling
- Anxiety about social activities
- Temper tantrums if demands are not met with [2]

Below are the commonly used rating scales for Autism Spectrum Disorder.

1. Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS) –

It is one of the widely used rating scale for the detection and diagnosis of autism (CARS; Schopler et al. 1980, 1988). The CARS consists of 14 domains assessing behaviours associated with autism, with a 15th domain rating the general impressions of autism. Each domain is scored on a scale ranging from one to four; higher scores are associated with a higher level of impairment. Total scores can range from a low of 15 to a high of 60; scores below 30 indicate that the individual is in the non-autistic range, scores between 30 and 36.5 indicate mild to moderate autism, and scores from 37 to 60 indicate severe autism [4]

CARS score	Degree of Autism
15 to 29	No to minimal Autism
30 to 36	Mild to moderate Autism
More than 37	Severe Autism

2. Indian Scale for Assessment of Autism (ISAA)

The National Institute for Mentally Handicapped (NIMH) developed the Indian Scale for Assessment of Autism (ISAA) for diagnosing and measuring the severity of autism in 2009.[5] This scale was based on CARS and has 40 items divided under six domains – social relationship and reciprocity; emotional responsiveness; speech, language and communication; behaviour patterns; sensory aspects and cognitive component. The items are rated from 1 to 5, increasing score indicating increasing severity of the problem. A score of <70 indicates no autism, 70-106 (mild autism), 107-153 (moderate autism), and >153 (severe autism). It takes about 15 to 20 minutes for administration of ISAA. The ISAA was devised with the aim of quantifying the severity of autistic symptoms so as to enable measurement of associated disability. It is an objective assessment tool uses observation, clinical evaluation of behaviour, interaction with the subject and the information supplemented by parents or caretakers to diagnose Autism. ISAA consists of 40 items rated on a 5 points scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The 40 items of ISAA are divided under six domains. ISAA was found easy to administer. There was difficulty in scoring the items grouped under emotional responsiveness category. Item number 11 and 14 were difficult to differentiate from one another [6].

ISSA score	Degree of Autism
Less than 70	Normal
70 to 106	Mild Autism
107 to 153	Moderate Autism
More than 153	Severe Autism

Autism severity assessment:

Level 1: Mild, requiring support

Level 2: Moderate, requiring substantial (or major) support

Level 3: Severe, requiring very substantial support

Intervention for Autism Spectrum Disorder:

Medications, Behaviour therapy and brain stimulation techniques are the treatment options available for children with mental disorders and developmental disorders. Applied Behaviour Analysis is the common treatment given for autism children that aims to promote positive behaviour and discourage negative or harmful behaviour. Medications are prescribed to treat hyperactivity, anxiety disorders and phobia [7]

Homoeopathic approach

In every illness the treatment of Homoeopathy is relying upon mind and disposition along with change in behaviour patterns. There are numerous symptoms/behaviours have been mentioned in our Materia Medica under various remedies. Each remedy has distinct behaviour patterns during illness. There are abundant rubrics available in the repertory covering the symptom picture of Autism spectrum disorder.

Homoeopathic remedies for ASD

Hyperactivity and Restlessness: Tarentula hispanica, Tuberculinum, Belladonna

Temper tantrums, violent behaviour: Merc.sol, Belladonna, Stramonium

Delayed speech: Natrum mur, Calcarea.phos, Baryta carb

Sleep disturbances: Kali.phos, Chamomilla

Monomania: Tarentula, Carcinosis

Efficacy of Homoeopathy:

A review article has been published in the journal of Clinical Archives of Communication Disorders. Totally 19 published articles were taken to analyse the effectiveness of homoeopathic treatment in ASD. Almost 17 studies showed that homoeopathy is effective in ASD. One study is inconclusive and another study found homoeopathy is not the suitable method for the treatment of ASD. Most of the studies are supporting homoeopathic treatment for ASD [8].

Conclusion:

Considering the drastic increase in number of autism children it is high time to assign various researches to prevent and treat Autism Spectrum Disorder effectively. Homoeopathic medicines can be introduced alongside the mainstream therapies for better results. Thereby we can save the future generations from disability and disintegration.

REFERENCES

1. Maenner MJ, Warren Z, William AR, et.al, Prevalence and characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder among children aged 8 years – Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, 11 sites, United states, 2020. MMWR surveill sum 2023; 72 (NO.SS-2):1-14. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.ss7202a1>
2. <https://www.webmd.com/brain/autism/understanding-autism-basics>
3. <https://www.ninds.nih.gov>
4. Chlebowski C, Green JA, Barton ML, Fein D. Using the childhood autism rating scale to diagnose autism spectrum disorders. J Autism Dev Disord. 2010 Jul;40(7):787-99. doi: 10.1007/s10803-009-0926-x. PMID: 20054630; PMCID: PMC3612531.
5. <http://www.nimhIndia.org.autism-india.com/autism.../indian-scale-for-assessment-of-autism-isa>
6. Patra S, Arun P. Use of Indian scale for assessment of autism in child guidance clinic: an experience. Indian J Psychol Med. 2011 Jul;33(2):217-9. doi: 10.4103/0253-7176.92043. PMID: 22345858; PMCID: PMC3271508.
7. <https://www.cdc.gov/autism/treatment/index.html>
8. Saxena V., Chako G., & Saxena U. Systematic review of the effectiveness of homeopathy in the treatment of autism spectrum disorder. Clinical Archives of Communication Disorders. 2021; 6(1):1-11