

# “It’s Complicated”

Dr. Janna Kautz  
Dr. Janice Sammons

# Disclosure

---

- The presenters do not have anything to disclose.

# Objectives

- Identify the presence if positive symptoms related to Autism
- Identify the absence of negative symptoms related to Autism
- Discuss the distinguishing differences between Autism Spectrum Disorder and Social Pragmatic Communication Disorder.

# It's Complex

- Diagnosing Autism is complex and takes a high level of training and experience.
- One of the best assessment tools available is the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule-Second Edition (ADOS-2).

# Positive and Negative Symptoms

- Presence of the Positive:
  - Hand, finger, or other complex mannerisms
  - Excessive interest in unusual or highly specific topics
  - Repetitive behaviors
  - Compulsions or rituals
- Absence of the Negative:
  - Eye contact
  - Gesture use
  - Facial expressions directed to others
  - Reciprocal social communication

# Key Characteristics in Younger Children

- Communication
  - Lack of joint attention
  - Lack of pointing and gesture use
  - Lack of eye contact
  - Lack of facial expressions directed to the examiner
  - Lack of showing/social overtures
  - No response to name
  - Lack of regard for the examiner

# Key Characteristics in Younger Children

- Restricted and Repetitive Behavior
  - Unusual sensory interest
  - Hand and finger mannerisms
  - Stereotyped/idiosyncratic language
  - Repetitive interests/stereotyped behaviors

# Key Characteristics in Older Students

- Looking for many of the same features as with younger students (e.g., lack of eye contact, lack of gesture use, repetitive behavior, etc.) but with older students another important feature is their insight into relationships and perspective taking ability.



# ASD vs. Social Pragmatic Communication Disorder

- ASD
  - Impairment in social communication
  - &
  - Restricted and Repetitive Behavior
- Social Pragmatic Communication Disorder (formerly Asperger syndrome)
  - Impairment in social communication

# School Diagnosis

- The majority of schools in the Tucson area require an evaluation which may include rating scales (e.g., CARS, GADS), developmental history interview (e.g., ADI-R), and a direct measure such as the ADOS-2.
- Without an evaluation including all or the majority of these components, the school will conduct a complete evaluation before providing services to the student.

# School Services

- While the student is awaiting an evaluation, he is typically in a general education setting without specially designed supports or services.
- The evaluation process can take up to 6 months to complete.
- If the child has an outside diagnosis with the necessary components, the school team can accept the diagnosis and placement can occur immediately.

# Recommendations

- Interview the parents to obtain a comprehensive developmental history.
- Observe the student for positive and negative symptoms of Autism.
- With unclear cases refer for a full evaluation in order to confirm or rule out the diagnosis.
- In order to help student receive services in the school setting use the discussed assessment tools or refer for a full evaluation.

# Case Study 1

- 5 year old male with history of attention issues and social deficits.
- Receives services in the school for language impairment and ADHD.
- Presenting symptoms:
  - Stereotyped language
  - Lack of eye contact
  - Repetitive motor movements

# Case Study 2

- 9 year old male with history of attention issues and social deficits.
- Receives school services through a 504 for ADHD.
- Presenting Symptoms:
  - Rigid behavior
  - Anxious behavior
  - Poorly modulated eye contact

# Knowledge Assessment

1. Key autism characteristics in younger children does NOT include:
  - a) Unusual sensory interest
  - b) Hand and finger mannerisms
  - c) Direct eye contact
  - d) Repetitive interests
2. An interview with each parent/caregiver is one of the most important diagnostic tools used.
  - a) True
  - b) False
3. Social Pragmatic Communication Disorder was formerly know as:
  - a) Autism Spectrum Disorder
  - b) Asperger Syndrome
  - c) Attention Deficit Disorder
  - d) Dyslexia