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Functional diagnosing of challenging behavior in adolescents with ASD in a clinical setting

Purpose: To introduce the notion of diagnosing as a broad process of assessment not to be confused with classifying psychopathology into DSM or ICD terms.

Methods: Comorbidity in Autism Spectrum Disorder is more rule than exception. In clinical practice women with ASD challenging internalizing problems (suicidal/self harm) and externalizing behavior (aggression-substance abuse) pose gross problems to teams that are not used to work with this category of patients. The literature will be reviewed and in a series of case presentations we will depict the situation. In doing that I will broaden the focus of the diagnostic process: This includes the individual diagnostic profile: Psychopathology and neuropsychological profile but also a functional assessment of the impact of behaviors of the patient on fellow patients and staff and family thus leading to a systemic analysis of patterns of interactions between all involved that need to be addressed in order to foster change for the better.

Conclusions: A true diagnostic appraisal is an essential step in order to define what is needed for and from the patient but also from and within the staff in cooperation with the relatives to break out of the vicious circle of powerlessness that the challenging behavior of women with ASD may induce.

Biography

Patricia J M Van Wijngaarden-Cremers is a Psychiatrist and working as an Expert for the Center of Expertise SCOS (Specialized Center Developmental Disorders) and Addiction Psychiatry Mental Health Hospital 'Dimence ". She is a Senior Research Fellow at the Medical Center of the Radboud University in Nijmegen. Her research focuses on gender differences in developmental disorders in particular the interaction between developmental and environmental factors (such as socialization, education, stress, substance abuse) on the development of psychopathology.

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