

Multiple Barriers to Autism Spectrum Disorders

Diagnosis in Latino Children

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Question

Why are Latino children diagnosed with Autism spectrum disorders less often and later than non-Latino white children?

Rationale

Autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) are a class of complex neurodevelopmental disorders characterized by a range of communication challenges, impairments in social reciprocity, and repetitive behaviors. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated that one in every 88 children has ASD which is a 23% increase in prevalence since 2009 (CDC, 2012). The reason for this increase is not yet understood, but better diagnostic tools and a greater awareness of the disorder have contributed to more identification of ASDs in children.

Although there has been an increasing trend in identification of ASDs, racial and ethnic disparities exist in the diagnosis of Latino and Black children compared to non-Latino Whites. Latino children are diagnosed with ASDs 2.5 years later than non-Latino white children and have more severe symptoms at the time of diagnosis according to Zuckerman et al. The reasons for low rates of ASDs diagnosis and diagnostic delay among Latino children is still poorly understood, but some studies have suggested that limited access to health-care and resources might be a primary factor.

This research poster examines factors other than limited health-care access that may explain delayed diagnosis or lower rates of ASDs in Latino children.



Results

Developmental and Autism Screening

Zuckerman et al. surveyed primary care providers (PCPs) and assessed how often PCPs performed general developmental and ASDs screenings. Per the American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines:

- 30.4% of PCPs administered a general developmental screening
- 42.9% of PCPs administered ASDs screening

Rates were even lower for screenings administered in Spanish for Latino families.

- 1 of 10 PCPs offered both general developmental and ASD screenings in Spanish
- PCPs with >25% Latino patients didn't administer Spanish screenings at a significantly higher rate than PCPS <25% Latino patients

Ability to Identify Signs of ASDs in Latino Children

PCPs reported having more difficulty recognizing the signs and symptoms of ASDs in Latinos compared to African American and non-Latino white children (Zuckerman et al). PCPs who were more successful at identifying ASDs signs and symptoms in Latinos had the following characteristics:

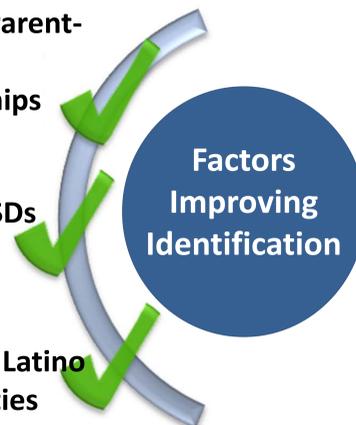
- higher Spanish proficiency
- Latino provider in their practice
- >25% Latino patients

These PCPS, however, still reported more difficulties in identifying ASDs in Latinos compared to non-Latino white children.

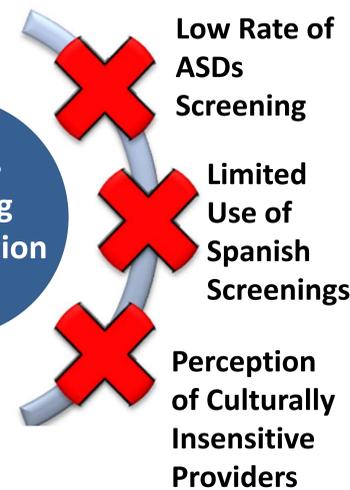
Effective Parent-Provider Relationships

Use of Spanish ASDs Screening

Educating Latino communities about ASDs



Factors Delaying Identification



Quality of Provider Interaction

Latino mothers were more likely to have the following notions about health care providers than non-Latino white mothers (Parrish et al.):

- health care provider does not spend enough time with the child
- provider is not culturally sensitive
- provider does not make the parent feel like a partner
- provider does not listen carefully

Parent-Provider Relationship

Diagnosis Information	Non-Latino White	Latino
Mean age when first noticed something different in child (years)	1.2	1.5
Mean age told PCP (years)	1.7	2.1
Mean age diagnosed (years)	3.1	3.9
Proactive MD response	28.6%	35.4%

Magaña et al.

Conclusion

Recent studies have shown that early ASDs identification is associated with improved long-term prognosis and family coping with the disorder. Since Latino children aren't diagnosed until later, this critical period of early intervention is often missed. Therefore, it is important to tackle the barriers contributing to delayed diagnosis in order to optimize outcomes for Latino children with ASDs:

- PCPs need to use language-appropriate developmental and ASDs screenings
- Additional resources for PCPs about bilingualism and cultural customs since PCPs had difficulty recognizing signs and symptoms of ASDs in Latino children
- More initiatives for cultural competence of health care providers in order to improve interactions and relationships with Latino families
- Provide Latino communities with resources regarding the signs and symptoms of ASDs

References

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