



# LEADING THE WAY FOR NURSES TO WORK WITH AUTISTIC PATIENTS

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## PURPOSE

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) is a broad term encompassing a group of neurodevelopmental disabilities and the diagnosis of social communication disorder (SCD, DSM-V; APA, 2013).



# PURPOSE

- ASD prevalence continues to rise with one in sixty-four individuals diagnosed (CDC, 2014).
- Nearly twenty-five percent of Americans have a disability with nurses treating them in hospitals, clinics, and schools on a daily basis (US Census, 2012).



## DIFFERENCES IN PROVIDING CARE

Persons with ASD are startled by voice inflections, can experience sensory disturbances including sensitivity to sounds, odors, and touches (Autism Speaks, 2014; Nordqvist, 2013).

Uses words and statements literally and generally do not understand slang language (Autism Speaks, 2014).

ASD people often do not recognize social cues (Autism Speaks, 2014).



# MEDICATIONS

- Nurses may not be familiar with administering medications prescribed for co-morbid conditions accompanying a ASD.
- Nurses are not educated on side effects and drug interactions between these medications.
- ASD patients are often prescribed more than one medication.



## METHODS

- The study explored nurses' knowledge of the diagnostic criteria and secondary conditions related to ASD, their involvement in the identification and treatment of ASD, their knowledge of medication used to treat ASD, and their overall medication management of children with ASD (McIntosh, 2013).



# PARTICIPANTS

- Participants included 100 nurses, representing 18 states, who completed a survey on ASD using various types of questions including open-ended fill-in-the blank, yes/no and multiple option.



## RESULTS

- The majority of nurses were aware Autism and Asperger's Disorders should fall under the classification of ASD within the school setting.
- They were less sure on whether PDD-NOS should be included as an ASD.
- A high percentage indicated they received training in the area of ASD from self-study rather than from formal coursework or supervised clinical experiences.





# RESULTS

- Results found limited involvement of nurses during the assessment and evaluation process.
- There was more involvement after children had been classified with an ASD, which was primarily limited to the administration of medication and medical treatments.



## CONCLUSIONS

- Future research should focus on specific medications administered to children with autism.
- With a plethora of medications available treating an assortment of co-morbidities, it is important for the nurses to stay abreast of current treatments.
- Specifically, future research should focus on how best to educate nurses on medication trends and on administering medication to children with autism would facilitate best practice.



# CONCLUSIONS

- As children with a diagnosis of ASD mature into adulthood, nurses in all areas of practice must be knowledgeable of ASD, common medication ordered, strategies to prevent and deescalate a meltdown or negative behaviors, and how to maintain a safe environment.



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