AUTISM IN THE ELDERLY

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THE ‘POWER’ OF BIAS

- What do you see?
- Why?
- How does one train oneself to see things differently?
A JOURNEY THROUGH A PATIENT

- 72 year old ‘very difficult’ lady
- Moved to the log term care facility a number of years ago
- Never really settled in
- Always complaining
- Found fault with staff and patients
- Poor sleeping
- Fussy with food
- Multiple complaints
- Complaints to the ministry
- Investigations
❖ Staff avoided her if possible
❖ Many different pills
❖ What was the problem?
**PREVALENCE**

- 1.1% (ages 16 – 44),
- 0.9% (ages 45- 74), and
- 0.8% (ages 75 and older).

- US-alone- 700,000 subjects with ASD who are older than 65 by 2030
• An estimated 8 million people in Europe with ASD

• 20% - are older than 65 years of age.
KEY FEATURES

- Autism is not just a ‘child and youth disorder
- Causes significant morbidity
- Childhood history is hard to obtain
- Patients often can't remember or don't know
DSM-5

- One of the few good things in it!
- Autism spectrum disorder
COMORBIDITY

- ADHD
- Depression
- Anxiety disorders'
Persistent deficits- Social communication and interaction

Restricted interests-inflexible adherence to certain routines/perseverative interests/ rigid thinking

Must be there from an early developmental period- may manifest only later on with demands

Must cause significant distress

Not accountable by intellectual disability/
SEVERITY LEVELS

- Level 1 - difficulties in social relations/communication. Problems with flexibility
- Level 2 - limited initiation of social interaction/oddities that are marked
- Level 3 - Severe deficits
TREATMENT

- Recognition
- Education - staff and family
- Antidepressants
- Supportive therapy and behavioural supports
CONCLUSION

- ASD in the elderly is a field that is understudied, not well understood, and very soon to be understaffed and overwhelmed.

- Challenges of caring for this increasing demographic of the population must not be underestimated. The facilities need to be built keeping in mind their sensitivities.

- Comorbid ADHD
REFERENCES


THANK YOU