



Clinical Care Guidelines for:

# Pervasive Developmental Disorders

## OBJECTIVE

Guide the appropriate diagnosis and treatment of Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD) in children and adolescents. PDD includes a group of disorders that are characterized by delays in the development of socialization and communication skills. Autism, a developmental brain disorder, is the most common of the disorders and well studied. The other types of disorders included in PDD are: Asperger's Syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, Pervasive Developmental Disorder, NOS, and Rett's Syndrome.

## DIAGNOSIS & ASSESSMENT

### DSM-IV-TR DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA

- Parents may notice symptoms in early infancy, although the typical age of onset is prior to age 3.
- Symptoms of disorders on the higher functioning end of the spectrum may emerge later.
- Symptoms may include difficulty with understanding and expressing language, problems relating to peers and objects, unusual focus on toys or objects, repetitive body movements or repetitive behavior, and sensory sensitivity.
- Symptoms cause significant impairment in functioning in more than one setting.
- 6 or more items from the following 3 areas, with at least two from (1) and one from (2) and (3):
  1. Qualitative impairment in social interaction
  2. Qualitative impairment in communication
  3. Restricted or repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior

Early intervention is critical in obtaining appropriate support and services for this population.

### PROCEDURES

Diagnosis of a Pervasive Developmental Disorder requires a multi-disciplinary evaluation. This will include:

- Screening with PMP
- Obtaining a thorough history that includes:
  - Language development; occurrence of repetitive movement; problems relating to others, objects, and/or environment; sensitivity to sensory input (loud noises, lights); difficulty adjusting to changes in routine; and unusual focus on an object (toys, obsessive talk about a particular subject of interest)
- Referral to specialist(s)
  - Psychologist
  - Speech Therapist
  - Occupational Therapist
- All data is put into a developmental profile

**Applicable Rating Scales:** CARS, CHAT, & Autism Screening Questionnaire

## TREATMENT

### MEDICATION MANAGEMENT

A trial of medication may be appropriate based on the severity of symptoms and level of impairment in functioning.

May re-administer behavior ratings to monitor response to medication.

If on atypical anti-psychotic medication, monitor blood glucose levels.

### THERAPY

Applied Behavior Analysis (for low functioning individual), Speech/Language, and Occupational Therapy.

Special education programs and support services through the school system.

Support services for parents, community-based resources, respite services, and evaluation and training with a behavioral specialist who works with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

If child is discharged from inpatient hospitalization, child needs to be seen in an outpatient setting, intensive outpatient setting or partial hospitalization by a behavioral health provider within 7 calendar days.

*\*Early treatment for PDD must recognize it is a chronic condition that will need to be monitored over long periods in order to assist the person with PDD in the on-going management of this disorder. Multi-disciplinary therapies are more effective over the course of the disorder than one form of therapy alone.*

## REFERENCES

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition –TR (2000) American Psychiatric Association.

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