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CENTER FOR AUTISM AND RELATED DISABILITIES



FACT SHEET – PERVASIVE DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

Pervasive Developmental Disorders-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)

PDD-NOS is an abbreviation for Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified. It is one of five disorders classified as Pervasive Developmental Disorders (others include Autism, Asperger's syndrome, Rett's syndrome, and Childhood Disintegrative Disorder).

The diagnosis PDD-NOS is usually given to an individual who does not meet the diagnostic criteria for any of the four other Pervasive Developmental Disorders, yet clearly shows unusual development in the areas of communication, social interaction, and interests/attention.

PDD-NOS is a neurological disorder, and symptoms can range from mild to severe. Often, individuals with a PDD-NOS diagnosis have more intact social skills than individuals diagnosed with other Pervasive Developmental Disorders. Sometimes this diagnosis is given to very young children with limited communication skills who also show characteristics of autism. As the child's communication skills increase, other symptoms of autism may become more apparent.

Characteristics

No two individuals diagnosed with PDD-NOS are exactly alike. However, many individuals with PDD-NOS have some characteristics in common, such as:

- Deficits in social behavior
- Uneven skill development (strengths in some areas and significant delays in others.)
- Poorly developed speech and language comprehension and skills
- Difficulty with changes in environment
- Deficits in nonverbal communication
- Uncommon responses to taste, sight, sound, smell, and touch
- Repetitive or ritualistic behaviors (i.e. opening and closing doors repeatedly or switching a light on and off)
- Unusual likes and dislikes

Causes

The causes of PDD-NOS are still unknown. There is a strong belief in the medical community that the disability's origin is genetic and/or biological and affects brain function, but specific biological mechanisms remain unclear. There is a possibility that more than one variable could be responsible for the different symptoms that are present in those individuals with PDD-NOS.

There are no factors in a child's upbringing that are responsible for PDD-NOS. Parents do not cause PDD-NOS.

Facts

Current estimates are that 3-4 per 1000 individuals may have PDD-NOS. PDD-NOS often occurs with some degree of cognitive impairment. Individuals with PDD-NOS are found in all races, ethnicities, and social statuses.

Treatment

Treatment and educational needs for individuals with PDD-NOS include but are not limited to:

- (1) An early and accurate diagnosis, which improves a child's chances of reaching his or her full potential.
- (2) Specialized and intensive interventions, which may include educational, behavioral, occupational, and speech therapies.

Success is optimized when a collaborative effort occurs among all parties involved in the individual's life and a comprehensive treatment approach is utilized.