

Quality standards in diagnosis, therapy and counseling autism and other developmental disorders

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Abstract

Medical, psychological, pedagogic and other therapeutic experts are confronted with autism. Increasing and fast changes in theory and methods around the subject demand clearly structured concepts for diagnosis and therapy in European Higher Education and Research work.

Latest results of epidemiology studies on the subject of “autistic spectrum disorders” (ASD) show a far higher diversification than a few years ago. Realizable and transparent planning of treatment is needed to adjust to the prevalent manifestations in ASD to guarantee that diagnostics, therapy, curricular education and training can be co-ordinated in an optimal way. Considering the costs over many years and the multiple differences between the European countries it can be regarded as a highly important task to form significant criteria for studies and trainings for ASD. Processes of diagnosis and treatment must be adjustable cultural differences within Europe and respect differences in medical and pedagogic systems.

Typically a wide spectrum of specific behavioural functions and dysfunctions can be seen amongst autistic person's abilities and disabilities. Our concept for dealing with ASD clients in Schleswig and Kiel (Germany) has over many years resulted in a significant reduction of therapy frequencies and durations. We found that a wide facet of factors and aspects has to be included for diagnosis, therapy, treatment and social integration strategies. Only then and with the help of specific counseling strategies (an integral part of

the entire ASD treatment) competence of ASD children and adolescents can sustainably be enforced in the social environment

Future work with ASD should approach the criteria scales of ICF as far as possible, as many clients with Asperger Syndrome have specific talents that successfully could be reinforced and utilized for integration into work force society at large. EUROPET could serve as a prominent platform and multiplier for appropriately updated, intensified and quality assured strategies in higher education and vocational training with paediatricians, developmental psychologists and other professions concerned with ASD in Europe

Different (also culturally based) realities in the European countries for diagnosis, therapy and counseling not only concern ASD but multiple other concepts and areas in paediatrics. Therefore widely faceted harmonization of transparent, evidenced based standards and procedures are required. These preferentially should allow more holistic, intimate interdisciplinary, generally social cohesive and at the same time individually obliged approaches to guarantee sustainable outcome.

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