

A) Asperger's Disorder

Asperger Syndrome is a neurobiological disorder named after the Viennese physician, Hans Asperger, who in 1944 published a research paper which described a pattern of behaviors in several young boys who had normal intelligence and language development, but who also exhibited autistic-like behaviors and marked deficiencies in social and communication skills. It wasn't until 1994 that Asperger Syndrome was recognised as a unique disorder.

■ CRITERIA ■

- Shows a marked inability to regulate social interaction by using multiple non-verbal behaviors such as body posture and gestures, eye contact and facial expression.
- Doesn't develop peer relationships that are appropriate to the developmental level.
- Doesn't seek to share achievements, interests or pleasure with others.
- Lacks social or emotional reciprocity.

- Restricted repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests, and activities, as manifested by at least one of the following:
 - Preoccupation with abnormal (in focus or intensity) interests that are restricted and stereotyped (such as spinning things).
 - Rigidly sticks to routines or rituals that don't appear to have a function.
 - Has stereotyped, repetitive motor mannerisms (such as hand flapping).
 - Persistently preoccupied with parts of objects.
- The symptoms cause clinically important impairment in social, occupational or personal functioning.
- There is no clinically significant general delay in language (e.g., single words used by age 2 years, communicative phrases used by age 3 years).
- There is no clinically significant delay in cognitive development or in the development of age-appropriate self-help skills, adaptive behavior (other than in social interaction), and curiosity about the environment in childhood.

■ **The patient doesn't fulfill criteria for Schizophrenia or another specific Pervasive Developmental Disorder.**

Associated Features:

Associated features of Asperger's Syndrome which are not required for diagnosis but are commonly present include delay in motor development often seen as clumsiness, extreme sensitivities to sensations, and excessive, but non-interactive, speech when related to areas of interest. In addition, many children with Asperger's will have behavior problems due to their difficulty in understanding the world around them

Differential Diagnosis:

Some disorders have similar symptoms. The clinician, therefore, in his diagnostic attempt has to differentiate against the following disorders which need to be ruled out to establish a precise diagnosis.

- Age-appropriate Behaviors in Active Children.
- Mental Retardation.
- Under Stimulating Environments.
- Oppositional Behavior.
- Another Mental Disorder.
- Pervasive Developmental Disorder.
- Psychotic Disorder.
- Other Substance-Related Disorder Not Otherwise Specified.