

B) Autistic Disorder

Autism is a developmental disorder that typically appears during the first three years of life and may be the result of a neurological disorder that affects the brain. Autism is classified by the American Psychiatric Association as a Pervasive Development Disorder (APA, 1994). It is defined by symptoms that appear before the age of three which reflect delayed or abnormal development in Language, Social Skills and Behavioral Repertoire.

■ CRITERIA ■

■ The person fulfills a total of at least 6 criteria from the following 3 lists, distributed as indicated:

Impaired social interaction (at least 2):

- Markedly deficient regulation of social interaction by using multiple non-verbal behaviors such as eye contact, facial expression, body posture and gestures.
- Lack of 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.

Impaired communication (at least 1):

- Delayed or absent development of spoken language for which the patient doesn't try to compensate with gestures.
- In person's who can speak, inadequate attempts to begin or sustain a conversation.
- Language that is repetitive, stereotyped or idiosyncratic.
- Appropriate to developmental stage, absence of social imitative play or spontaneous, make-believe play.

Activities, behavior and interests that are repetitive, restricted and stereotyped (at least 1 of):

- 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.

■ **Before age three, the person shows delayed or abnormal functioning in 1 or more of these areas:**

Social interaction.

Language used in social communication.

Imaginative or symbolic play.

■ **These symptoms are not better explained by Childhood Disintegrative Disorder or Rett's Disorder**

Associated Features:

Learning Problem

Dysarthria or Involuntary Movement

Hypoactivity

Psychosis

Odd or Eccentric or Suspicious Personality

Anxious or Fearful or Dependent Personality

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.

Rett's Disorder;

Childhood Disintegrative Disorder;

Asperger's Disorder;

Schizophrenia;

Selective Mutism;

Expressive Language Disorder;

Mixed Receptive-Expressive Language Disorder;

Mental Retardation;

Stereotypic Movement Habit Disorder.