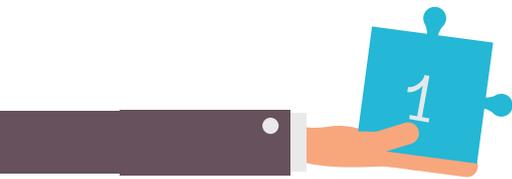


AADMD
Newsletter
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AUTISM

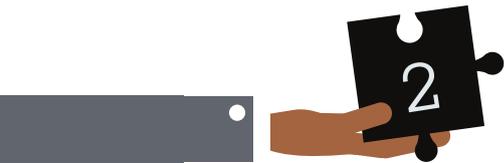
EDITOR IN CHIEF: DR. MOHAMMED B. ESTATIA
EDITOR: DIMA ARAB SALEH

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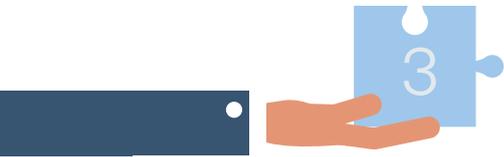
AN INSIGHT INTO AADMD

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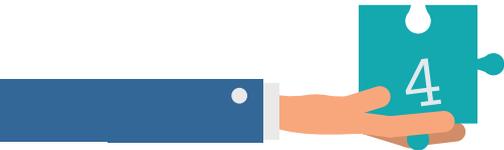
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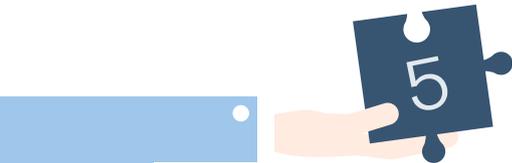


AUTISM: SCIENCE SPEAKS

- MEDICAL RESEARCH
- DENTAL RESEARCH



MY ROLE AS A MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY



AADMD CALENDAR



APPENDIX



An insight into

AADMD



SARAH SAFAA JUMAAH

What is AADMD?

The American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry is a nonprofit membership organization of interdisciplinary health professions. We work hand-in-hand to improve the healthcare system for the silent population, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, suffering at the hands of lacking awareness and comprehensive patient care. Our main mission is to voice their challenges and triumphs and equip today's healthcare practitioners with the necessary knowledge to care for people of determination. We will discuss this further, along with other topics, in the following interviews, as we take a deeper look into the leaders of AADMD.



The Board

Dr. Khaldoon Mardini

- President of the AADMD UOS Chapter
- Dental Intern at University Dental Hospital Sharjah (UDHS)
- Former Campus Director of the HULT prize foundation (2019)
- Certified national trainer for the Special Olympics, UAE
- Former president of the University of Sharjah Dental Student Association (USDSA - 2018/2019)
- University of Sharjah and UAE representative at the HULT prize regional finals-Kuala Lumpur (2018)
- Former Treasurer of the Gulf Dental Students Association



Dr. Khaldoon Mardini
PRESIDENT

What are the milestones that will be achieved by the AADMD this year?

Our aim this year is to keep up with the current COVID situation and establish our digital identity. We already have social-media outreach through our Instagram and Facebook pages but we are aiming to leave a bigger digital footprint; We want to create a YouTube page, where we will be posting multiple video series each respectively targeting a specific group of people with developmental disabilities. We will also be starting our first AADMD UOS Chapter newsletter and preparing for the international virtual conference which will be gathering most of the prominent figures in the field.



What is your vision for the AADMD?

I would like to see the AADMD UOS Student Chapter as one of the main associations in the UAE in regards to raising awareness towards people of determination and striving towards more integration and care. I would like to see our student chapter not only in the UAE, but cross borders to the MENA region and worldwide.

How has becoming a member of the AADMD family affected you?

So, I have been with the AADMD for two years now. It is a great pleasure to be part of the AADMD family as it comes with a great learning opportunity, providing many lessons not only in the medical field, but in life as well. It also goes without saying that helping the community is unparalleled. Personally, part of becoming a doctor was to help others and the AADMD provided me and my fellow colleagues with a great opportunity to do so.

Which part in your practice do you enjoy the most?

I have recently graduated dental school and wish to continue my education. I aspire to be a great surgeon one day in the future. The best part I would say is meeting the patients, listening to their problems, forming life-long professional connections with the patient, and of course, nothing is better than having your patient exit your clinic with a healthy new smile.

What are the things you wish you knew back when you were in your first year of college?

I wish I had known about the outreach and volunteering programs for dental students as it would have been an amazing experience, filled with knowledge and benefit for all those involved. Another important thing is not studying only for the mere objective of passing a test, but rather to learn instead to help others. Life is more than just a grade, and as a future doctor, you should always aim towards bettering yourself in order to better others' lives.



Dr. Fatemeh Ghiasi

- General Secretary at the AADMD UOS Chapter
- Dental Intern at University Dental Hospital Sharjah (UDHS)
- Volunteer at the 2019 Special Smiles Olympics World Games
- Volunteer at a dental camp in Galle, Sri Lanka



AADMD: UOS Student Chapter

Dr. Fatemeh Ghiasi
GENERAL SECRETARY

Who do you consider as your role-model in life?

Actually, I consider my father to be my role-model because of his charitableness. Ever since I was little, I remember him always lending a hand to help someone in need, and I think that type of compassion is very important nowadays. I aspire to be as selfless as he is and to hold a position, like the one he has, in the hearts of the people I help.

What is the most difficult case you have encountered during your procedures?

The most difficult procedure I have performed was not challenging in the practical aspect but rather the emotional one. I will never be able to forget that day. It was during my fourth year of dental college when I volunteered to assist Dr. Shadi (founder and faculty advisor of the AADMD UOS Student Chapter) at the special needs clinic. The patient we were treating was in her 20's and had a low functioning case of autism. She came to the clinic with her sister. Dr. Shadi then decided to leave me alone with the both of them so I can converse with them and give my diagnosis within the boundaries of my own comfort. I did complete both extra- and intra-oral examinations; however, it was very emotionally and mentally challenging as there was no level of communication between the patient and I. I did not know how to give her instructions to open her mouth, for example, and what made things more difficult was the amount of caries she had, requiring me to perform full mouth clearance.



What made you run for this position?

I had always been volunteering in different organizations and doing a lot of charity work before getting to know about the AADMD due to my sheer passion of helping others and being involved in more things. I always tried my best to help out in any way, especially when I would go back to my country. Once I heard of the AADMD, I immediately wanted to take part in its impact and share my opinions, ideas, experiences. Another reason behind running for this position was meeting with children of determination and having to know them personally. At first, I was happy to volunteer, but later on, I was overwhelmed with joy after getting to meet such unique, fun-loving characters! I immediately knew I had to have a deeper involvement in AADMD.

How has COVID-19 affected the efforts of the AADMD?

Well, it actually did not affect us much; we had many different events and ideas during the past year. Many of the face-to-face events had to be cancelled due to the restrictions imposed by the outbreak. We did not let that faze us, but instead, went back and planned out other alternatives such as hosting online conferences. We worked diligently on organizing these events during these challenging times and our hard work was thankfully met with great results, as we were actually considered one of the most active organizations during COVID.

Why do you advise others to join the AADMD?

The reason why I would advise others to join AADMD is that we do our best to raise our community's voice and educate others, especially those new to the medical field, how to treat people of determination's ailments without mistreating them. The more hands we have on our team, the more we would have an outreach to others; thus, educating more people.



Dr. Mohammed B. Estaitia

- Public Relations Officer at the AADMD: UOS Chapter
- Dental intern at the University Dental Hospital Sharjah
- Current president of the University of Sharjah Dental Student Association (USDSA - 2020/2021)
- Former Head of the Social Committee of the USDSA (2017)



How has becoming an advocate for mental disability awareness changed your outlook on the patient-practitioner relationship?

I think when you become an advocate for such a noble cause, you understand different aspects of this point of view, which will help you develop the treatment plan you have to accommodate each patient you treat individually.



Dr. Mohammed Estaitia
PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER
EDITOR IN CHIEF

What part of being a dental practitioner do you find the most rewarding?

The most rewarding part about being a dental practitioner is the uncommunicated mutual trust between you and the patient and feeling like they feel safe in your hands. Another thing is communicating your thoughts on the treatment plan with a clear conscience and confidence.

How large of an impact does the AADMD have on our community?

AADMD UOS chapter is an idea that was brought to life a couple years ago with the mission of empowering people of determination. We can not change the past, but we can work on bettering the future and working towards a more inclusive healthcare system. It is of utmost importance to enquire the necessary soft skills in our field to ease people of determination before, during and after a treatment.

Where do you see yourself in 5 years as a member of the AADMD?

I do not think anyone knows where they will be in five years time, but what I am certain of is once you join AADMD, you will always be a member at heart. The most important thing to take from AADMD is how to manage patients no matter what their background is or disorder they may have and to spread your knowledge to others.



Community's Voice

A DAY INTO A FAMILY'S LIFE



SARRA MKADMI AND KHADIJAH ZAIDAN

Scientists have been trying to tackle the enigma that is autism for over 50 years now. With the aid of extensive research, technological advancements in investigative tools and communication devices, and most importantly, the increase in societal awareness, this disorder, although still enveloped in shadows of mystery, is slowly starting to unveil itself. However, autism is an intricate mental disorder, and trying to understand

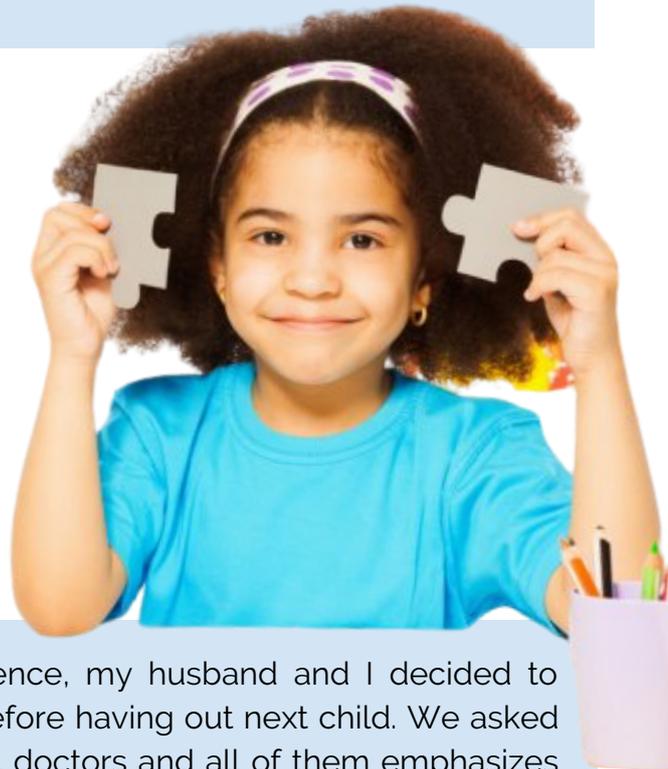
it alone via a professional scientific lens is sometimes not enough, as it lacks the humane approach, and the years of acclimating and living in the same environment as the autistic individual for years and the experience that comes with it. That is why, the AADMD newsletter is proud to present a new fresh outlook of autism, from the aspect of a brave strong mother of not one, but two autistic sons: Ahmed, a 26 year old, and Omar, a 20 year old.

How and when did you find out about your children being diagnosed with autism?



Obviously as any new mom, I didn't know much about children. When Ahmed was born, his development was pretty much normal up to the first year, he walked on time, but was not able to talk, and one thing that was concerning me is when I would call him, he wouldn't respond at all, not verbally, not even turning his head towards me. I thought it was normal, but family and friends started noticing it more, so I knew that something was wrong. Accordingly, when he was two, we went to see a pediatrician, she asked for a hearing test, but it came out normal. And she told us that it might be autism and she referred us to a psychiatrist. Personally, I had no idea what autism was. So, the psychiatrist took her time and explained everything to

me. Hence, my husband and I decided to wait before having our next child. We asked several doctors and all of them emphasize that autism rarely occurs twice within one family. However, 6 years later when Omar was born, it was defiantly easier for us to notice the disorder, and he was diagnosed around the age of two as well.



How do you communicate with your children?



Well, both of my boys cannot communicate verbally, as a result, they developed a way of communication by showing me objects referring to what they need or want. For example, if he wants to hang out and go somewhere outside, he will get his pants and shirt, instead of

saying 'I want to go outside' or maybe get the bread instead of saying "I am hungry" and obviously I understand what they mean by these signs, simply because they are my children. However, both can understand me when I talk.

Do you consider autism as a blessing or a curse? Why?



This question is wonderful, it's the best question yet. A great question indeed! On the contrary, it is a challenge from Allah, and I regard my situation to be so much better than many others. I thank God that I am truly blessed. God has given me a gift of 2 angels. This is obviously a blessing in my point of view, I love them with all my heart and I feel no sadness of having them. They have completed my life, and I in return want to make them happy. I feel like God has placed me in such a position because he loves me a lot. Life is not eternal, and we will all die at our given times. My children will enter heaven without any judgement and that is why I feel like it's truly a blessing. They have also greatly changed my personality. I have become so much more forgiving and understanding. I stopped being superficial

and caring about earthly matters. I grew closer to God and I am always thinking about my deeds and entering heaven. I thank God for all my blessings, because many people cannot feed their families or cannot have children of their own. Many people wish to be in my position. My boys will be the reason of me entering Heaven. I only hope to live long enough to serve my two children and make them feel happy. This is a beautiful question honestly. I never thought of myself as unlucky. I still live my life as I please and go out and have fun. I'm not isolated or depressed at all. I treat my boys like they are normal and have no deficiencies. I'm very thankful that we comprehend each other and have our own language of understanding.



Are or have your children gone through therapy (speech, physical, etc.)? If so, have you found an improvement in his skills?



Yes, both went through speech, behavioral, and occupational therapy, and it helped a lot especially, Omar, who has better skills than Ahmed. Although, when we came here to UAE we became distant from our family, and

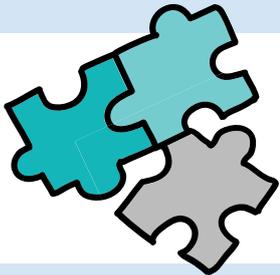
we notice that it has affected them negatively, because they have enjoyed their time with their aunts, uncles, and cousins, but here they spent more time home with me and their dad.

What are the difficulties that you face when your children are in need of medical consultation? Do you find general physicians qualified to help your children?



When it comes to the medical side, we face a huge problem with persuading Ahmed to allow the doctor touching him, or even doing painless simple procedures such as taking his blood pressure. This childhood-growing problem we face with Ahmed turn

up into a disaster in his medical side, affecting his health negatively. On other hand, Omar accepts the doctors' interactions as long as the doctor won't give him a needle, he refuses a needle so hard, and almost all doctors suffer to take his acceptance.



Are there any misconceptions about autism that you would like to debunk or clarify for our fellow readers?



Some people think that autistic children have no feelings. Or even worse, when people give the children a stereotypical disapproving look which honestly impacts me. Autistic people should be treated normally. Unfortunately, some are treated violently as if they have committed a crime! I have also experienced people giving me off handed comments that truly hurt my feelings, where they believe that I should not be content with what I have. The way we family members of autistic people are treated is what honestly gets to me. Our treatment should be regarded and handed in a better standard. There should be more

care and mercy to the autistic people first but also to the family members. We need mental support, and people to stand with us, because we as well try to bring our children to the outside world, but society instead refuse and decline this concept. This is a very important point: societal regards. Obviously, the family members also get affected by this emotionally. It feels as if we have committed a crime or something. The feelings of decline, animosity, and refusal from society members is very tangible unfortunately. Even though we are accepting of our situation, they are not.



Community's Voice

A PUBLIC FIGURE SPEAKS



HIBATALLAH FATHY MAHMOUD

In this month's issue, we look into individuals who didn't let their disability stand in the way towards their passions. Those people have achieved great strides on the national and international fronts, and they are celebrated for their achievements and talents. Our famous people on the spectrum are the Emirati Olympic swimmer Abdullah Altajer, and Emirati artist, illustrator and professional bowling player Abdullah Lutfi.

Abdullah Altajer Alshamisi

- **26 yrs old**
- **Emirati gold medalist in swimming, member of the National Emirati Special Olympics Team.**



Abdullah's story starts at a young age, when his family decided to enroll him in kindergarten. A year later, Abdullah displayed delays in speech and attention problems; which prompted his family to visit the Dubai Center for special needs for a professional diagnosis. Abdullah was then diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD.)

Abdullah had a passion for swimming at a young age, his eyes were always transfixed when watching swimming tournaments on TV. Abdullah had a dream to chase, and his family were his greatest supporters in that journey.

His early beginnings were by learning how to swim in a modestly sized swimming pool in his family's house, but this has quickly changed when he started making progress at a record pace. His family enrolled him with

Al Thiqah Club

for the handicapped in Sharjah, where he started training with professionals; forging the way for Abdullah to start competing professionally.

Abdullah started his professional swimming career at the young age of 4 in 2004, with his first ever silver and gold medals won by the age of 12 internationally in Tunisia. His achievements include winning the gold medal in the 7th regional MENA special Olympics in Abu Dhabi in 2014; winning the gold medal in the 2014 Special Olympics in China for the 50M breaststroke category, and winning the gold medal in the 2019 Special Olympics in Abu Dhabi, marking his total earnings of 50 gold medals won for the UAE as of now, Deserving to be nicknamed (The Gold Merchant) by his fans and coaches alike.



Abdullah Lutfi

- 27 yrs old
- Emirati artist and illustrator, member of the National Emirati Special Olympics Bowling Team



Abdullah's story begins with his diagnosis with ASD at the age of 4 years old. At a time where children with developmental disabilities were not treated well by their own families, Abdullah's family had a goal of their own; to treat Abdullah as an equal to his siblings, and to nurture his creativity. His family have helped with developing his art talent by hiring tutors and teachers, and by providing the necessary tools and colors to develop his art style. It was found that Abdullah was fond of black and white colors, and liked the contrast between both of them. His works feature a pop art style, and his preferred media is black ink on white canvas.

Abdullah was enrolled into Dubai's Mawaheb Center for Autism, and was

chosen as their very own virtuoso, where his art and clay crafts are on display. His art was also chosen to adorn Terminal 3 at the Dubai International Airport and Dubai Aviation Expo. Abdullah also loves bowling, and likes to enter competitions and win. He mentioned on record that bowling helps him strengthen his arm muscles, which allows him to hold pens and to sculpt better. He is now a member of the National Special Olympics team, and competes in regional and international tournaments.

Abdullah's work can be seen in the UAE Embassy in the United States, and is distributed internationally through his art books. He is very active in art conventions in the Emirates and worldwide; he also provides art classes and hands on workshops in Dubai.



Science Speaks

MEDICAL RESEARCH



MOHAMAD MONIF ASSKER



In retrospect

Autism didn't always yield the meaning that we understand nowadays. Instead, it was coined in 1911 to describe some of the manifestations of a different condition: schizophrenia. Child psychiatrists are to be credited for the distinction they've made in secluding autism from psychiatric conditions such as psychosis & schizophrenia and dissociating it from terms like "mentally retarded/ defective" by virtue of the 1959 mental health act. Such a separation was partly possible due to the reintegration of psychoanalytic theory with the development of children, stating that the characteristic self-centered primary narcissistic behavior that is normally present in infancy persists into adulthood as autism. Self-awareness

that is acquired with growth demarcates the line between fantasies and reality, and the lack of its development is another culprit in establishing an autistic state of thinking, rendering autism a communication disorder instead of a psychotic disorder.

Several iterations and attempts in explaining autism in an easy-to-comprehend list-form were made throughout the years after the mental health act. The constant refinement produced two main criteria needed to diagnose autism, namely:

To demonstrate clear difficulties in social communication.

to exhibit restricted, repetitive behavior/ interests that emerged from childhood, even if least noticeable.

Not just one shade

But rather, an entire spectrum, sharing a single core that is autism. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) encompasses the variations in autism that is seen among different patients who express their autistic behavior differently. This variation can be summarized by referring to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5 (DSM-5 for short) where ASD can be subclassified into:

Classic autism: where social impairment, speech deficits and repetitive compulsive behaviors are present since birth.



Child Disintegrative Disorder (Heller syndrome): where classic autism characteristics are present except for repetitive compulsive behavior which is substituted with regression in social, language or motor skills following an otherwise seemingly normal development throughout the first 2 years of life.

Asperger's syndrome (high functioning autism): where only social impairment and repetitive compulsive behaviors are present with no apparent speech deficits or skill loss.

PDD-NOS (pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified): which is a milder form of classic autism that does not fulfill all criteria of other ASDs.

Those diagnosed with ASD are further reported in terms of severity of impairment in social communication, severity of behavioral restriction or compulsivity, and level of sensitivity towards sensory stimulation that is out of normal proportion.

No cure? No problem.

Within the last decade, research enabled us to see a genetic component within Autism. Mainly, ones that play a role in the development of the nervous system and regulating its environment. This sparked multiple ideas that were later considered in developing management options for certain ASD patients.

Earlier on, psychoeducational intervention was the most widely distributed form of managing autism, where specialists incorporate behavioral intervention models to build the skills needed for daily function into the lifestyle of people with autism, with nearly 25 hours at least of direct skill practice. This approach is generally referred to as Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and its



different types are what healthcare professionals use as the mainstay today of managing ASD conditions outside clinical settings. Speech therapy and occupational therapy may also be incorporated in some cases.

Risperidone and aripiprazole are two drugs approved for managing symptoms that may be present in autistic individuals, namely maladaptive behavior and irritability. Other medications may be taken as needed if autistic patients develop any conditions that may be closely associated with ASD, like depression (antidepressants, SSRIs) and anxiety (Buspirone).

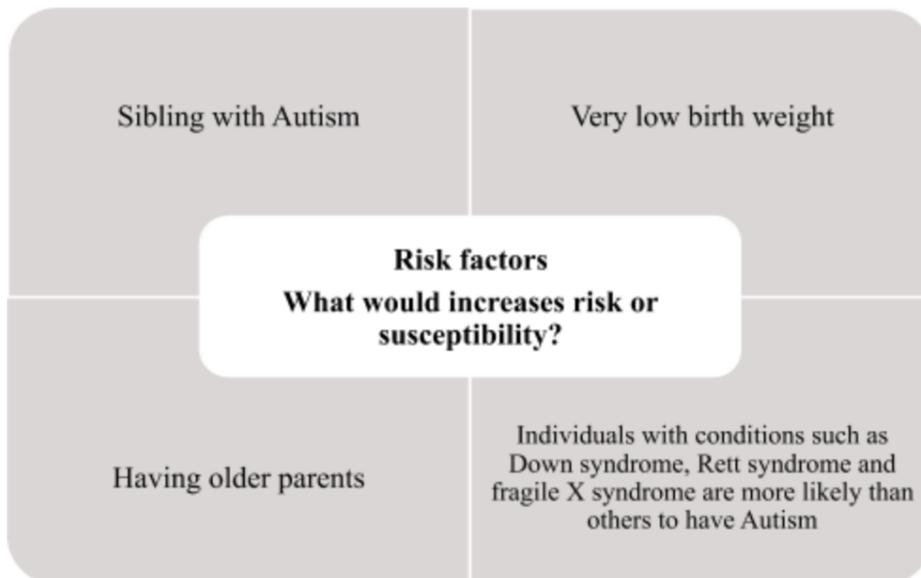
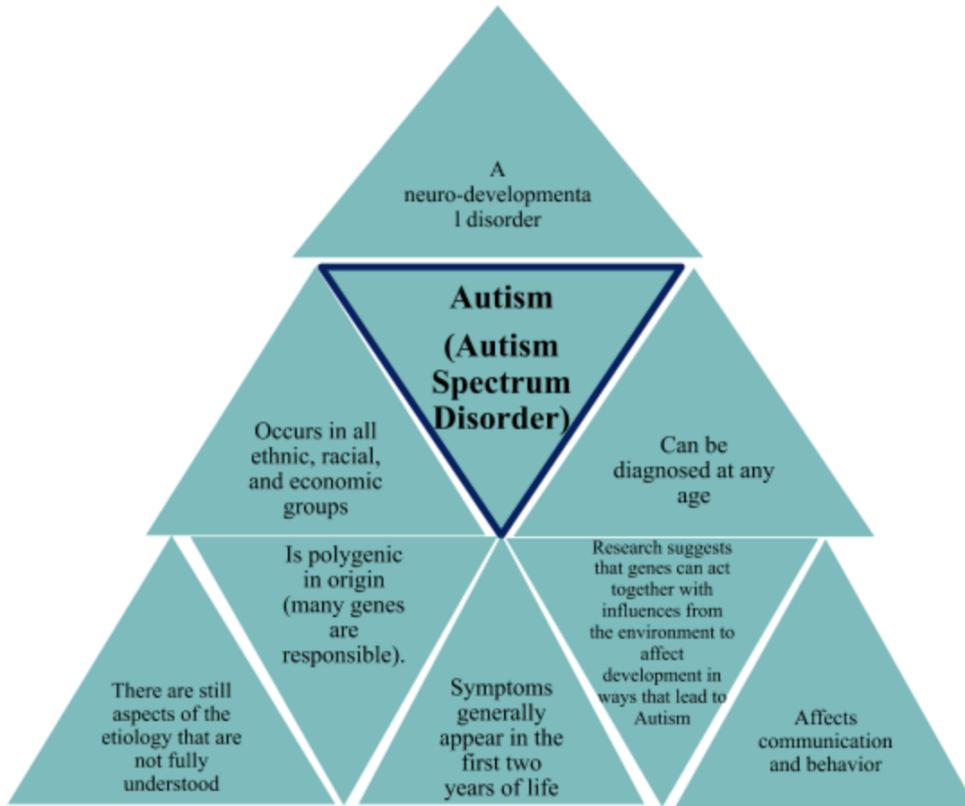


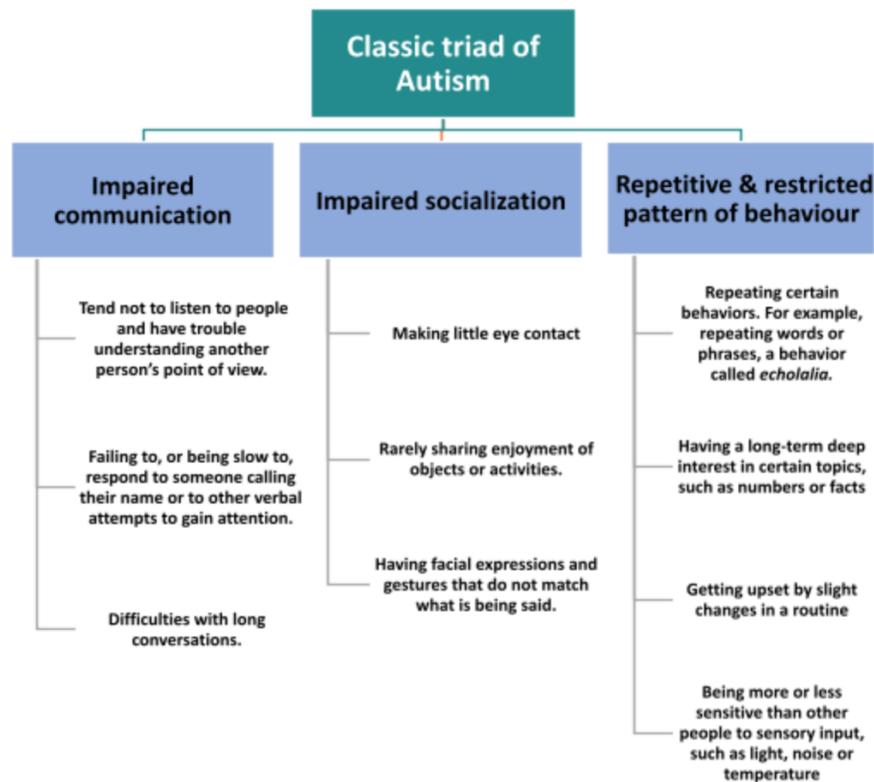
Science Speaks

DENTAL RESEARCH



OMAR ALABD MOHAMED





Autism in the dental clinic

To establish communication:

- Position yourself so the child can see you.
- Use simple language without jokes.
- Speak slowly.
- Limit background noise.
- Positive reinforcement of desired behavior.
- Use PECs (Picture exchange communication system) allows people to communicate via pictures or Makaton (signs and symbols) to communicate.

Once communication has been established:

- Establish toothbrushing as soon as possible.
- Encourage child to say "Ahh".
- Actively look for evidence of trauma (due to epilepsy or self injury)
- Frequent visits to dentist to give an opportunity to learn about the child (Hello visits).
- Dietary advice specific to each child
- Establish a time indicator, the child need to realize that the experience does have a time limit

They also may have many strengths, including:

Learning things in detail and recalling information for long periods of time.

Strong visual and auditory learners.

Excel in math, science, music or art.

Although people with Autism encounter many of the mentioned challenges



My Role as a Member of the Community

KNOW YOUR ROLE!

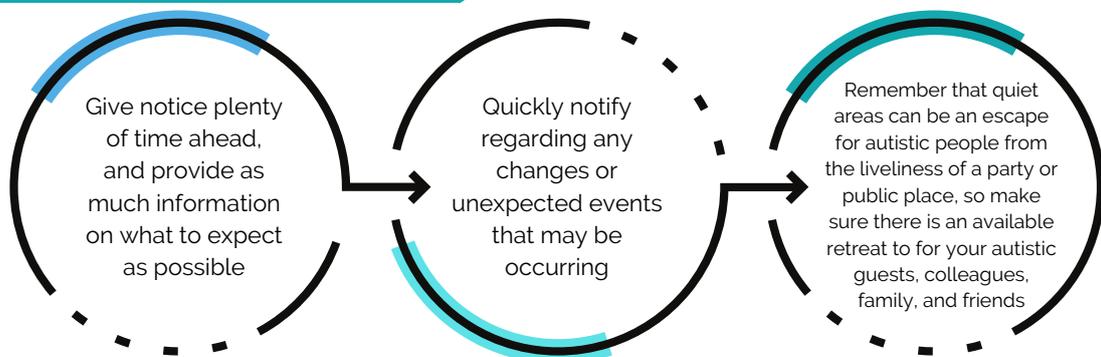


KHADIJAH ZAIDAN

People on the autism spectrum, their families, caregivers, and healthcare providers make up the autism community. In fact, over half of all people in society have a connection to someone from the autism community. This means that there are more people than ever who need to understand how they can help. Chiefly, your contribution starts by learning more about the autism spectrum disorder, understanding that it is a spectrum – meaning that it manifests in each individual differently-, and combating the demeaning

terms used by some to refer to autistic people by evidently raising awareness. Therefore, you must understand that what may be a minor inconvenience to you can be distressing to an autistic person. This is why good communication skills are key to creating new friends who are on the spectrum. If accessible, join volunteering groups, attend campaigns that voice the views of the autism community, sign up for workshops that allow you to further understand autistic people, attend/organize fundraisers, etc...

When organizing a social event:



Improve your communication skills:

Always remember that you are addressing an adult

Do not assume that this person has limited intellectual abilities

be patient and allow them to formulate their response

Avoid

1. Using sarcasm and slang,
2. Using terms of endearment
3. 'sweetheart, buddy'
4. Speaking about them to someone else as if they are not present in the room

Don't forget

1. To be an active listener
2. Specify what you mean and what you want
3. Choose a suitable place to have a chat
4. Keep a comfortable distance and respect personal space





UPCOMING DATES AND EVENTS



SARRA MKADMI

International Health Days marked in the Health Awareness Calendar, is a thoughtful endeavor developed to raise awareness and enlighten the public about different illnesses and syndromes. Several of these diseases, encompassing both mental and physical, are allocated to specific months along the calendar. As a result, people dealing with the illness can have their own deserved spotlight for an entire month; where charity events can be orchestrated, and awareness campaigns can really shine.

Mark your calendars fellow AADMD readers! The following is a list of what you can look forward to in the upcoming month of February.



World Cancer Day



International Childhood Cancer Day



To any of the generous readers that are interested in charity, Friends of Cancer Patients (FOCP) is a non-profit organization in the UAE that is committed to providing a helping hand, both morally and financially to those in need of cancer treatment. To learn more, visit their website linked: <https://focp.ae/>



Appendix

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