




## ADVANCING HEALTHCARE QUALITY FOR PEOPLE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

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*"I don't seek healthcare I could really use, even though I have insurance, because I know that seeking non-emergent health care will probably ultimately do more harm than good."*

*Autistic mother of two, Twin Cities, MN*


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## LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Describe the clinical manifestations and prevalence of autism spectrum disorder.
2. Identify challenges in the healthcare setting for individuals on the autism spectrum and their families
3. Strategize methods to provide patient-centered care in the attendee's own health setting
4. Describe the Health Professions Autism Network, a Community of Practice on the intersection of autism and healthcare

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## KEY POINTS

- Autism exists across the lifespan, in all genders, and often in people who are undiagnosed
- Health disparities are significant in this population
- Health professionals in every setting will encounter individuals on the spectrum and can positively effect the experience and outcome for individuals on the spectrum and their families


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## CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS

- Impaired communication
- Impaired social development
- Repetitive, restrictive, stereotyped behaviors

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## PREVALENCE OF AUTISMS

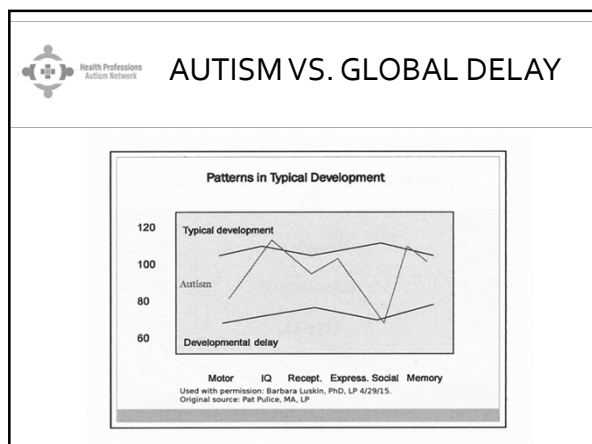
1 in 68 children  
(>14 per every 1000 children)

5 times more commonly diagnosed in boys than girls

1% of the US population

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## SIGNIFICANT HEALTH DISPARITIES

- Risk for mortality is two to three times higher than comparison groups of the same age and sex
- Increased rates of
  - Seizure disorder
  - Hypertension
  - Anxiety and depression
  - Gastrointestinal disorders
  - Allergies
  - Sleep disturbances
  - Diabetes
  - Bipolar disorder
  - Autoimmune disorders
  - Thyroid disease
- Greater utilization of the Emergency Department, while the utilization of non-emergency healthcare drops over the transition years

## GOALS

- Remain free of injury
- Promote healthy development
- Participate in life  
(family, school/work, community)
- Achieve maximum state of well being for the individual and their family

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## CHALLENGES WHILE SEEKING HEALTHCARE

- Communication Processing
- Theory of Mind
- Executive Function
- Sensory Processing Issues

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## PROFESSIONALS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN ANY SETTING

### Communication

- Adjust communication techniques: slow down, use fewer words, concrete language, support communication devices and ask how to best communicate
- Teach to the individual's developmental level
- Give warnings before transitions
- Whenever possible, tell them what's to come
- Use visuals aids
- Enlist their caregivers to help

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## PROFESSIONALS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN ANY SETTING

### Logistics

- Schedule daily care and routine procedures at consistent times
- Limit the number of caregivers; provide consistency
- Enlist their caregivers to help
- Check on them frequently, especially if waiting
- Use a separate quiet waiting area

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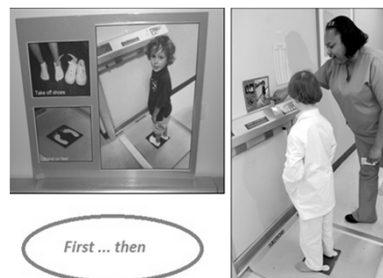
## PROFESSIONALS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN ANY SETTING

### Sensory

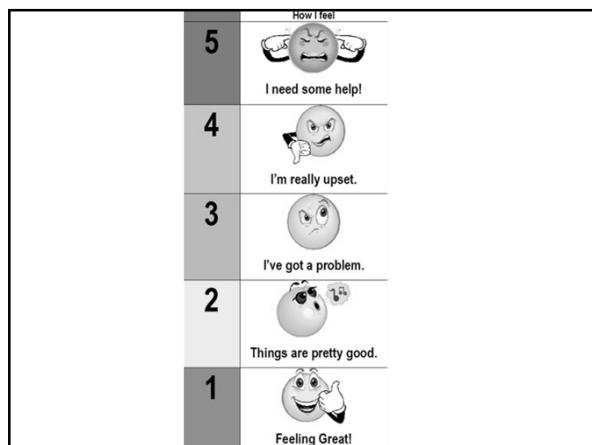
- Ask about sensory issues
- Watch lights, sounds, touch
- Ask about food needs/ preferences
- Be aware of odor sensitivity (perfume, cologne) and that they may not be aware of their own odor

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### Visuals



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WWW.HPAUTISMNETWORK.ORG

- Membership is free and open to all health professionals
- Resource repository
- Community forum for online networking and conversation
- Blog on the intersection of autism and healthcare

@HlthProAutNtwrk

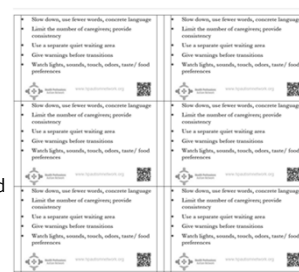


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## BADGE CARDS

- Print them on card stock in color, duplexed
- Cut at the inner marks
- Place into your badge holder or attach to the back of your badge
- Keep one for yourself and share the rest with your peers!



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## WITH GRATITUDE

- Members of the Guiding Coalition
- Advisor: Dr. Sue Bell, PhD
- Autism Society of Minnesota
- Becky Taylor Fellowship, through the Glen Taylor Nursing Institute for Family and Society at Minnesota State University, Mankato

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