

Health Pulse magazine

AUTISM IS NOT A DISEASE



AUTISM AWARENESS

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HCOWAA: Advancing Healthcare Standards in West Africa

The Health Community of West Africa Association (HCOWAA), based in Ghana, is a non-governmental organization dedicated to advancing healthcare across West Africa. Addressing the uneven distribution of medical resources, HCOWAA advocates for regional cooperation through a Health Alliance that unites healthcare stakeholders to create a cohesive health community.

With a mission to improve health outcomes in West Africa, HCOWAA facilitates collaboration, innovation, and research among professionals, leveraging collective resources to enhance healthcare services, policies, and access. HCOWAA envisions a resilient West African healthcare system where institutions and professionals lead groundbreaking research, foster innovation, and influence policies that elevate regional healthcare.

Through initiatives like establishing a regional healthcare database, launching research projects, and hosting policy roundtables, HCOWAA builds strong networks to drive healthcare advancements. Advocacy efforts focus on equitable access, supporting vulnerable populations, and addressing healthcare disparities. The organization's objectives include fostering research and innovation, supporting health policy reforms, and integrating medical equipment manufacturers with healthcare facilities.

HCOWAA also facilitates training programs, academic exchanges, and research grants, ensuring members are equipped with knowledge and skills to address regional health challenges effectively. Networking events like the HCOWAA Medical and Health Industry Investment Summit & Expo connect professionals, offering a platform for partnership and knowledge sharing.

HCOWAA's commitment extends to partnerships with international health organizations and academic institutions, which amplify its impact by introducing global best practices and strengthening West African healthcare infrastructure. Collaborative efforts with international partners promote training, research, and infrastructure upgrades for health facilities, pharmaceutical establishments, and clinics.

In addition, HCOWAA's magazine partnerships, including an MoU with Health Pulse Magazine, provide platforms to publish relevant content, share insights, and enhance visibility for ongoing initiatives. Through these combined efforts, HCOWAA aims to foster a collaborative healthcare environment that not only addresses urgent health challenges but also builds a sustainable, inclusive healthcare future for West Africa.

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Universal Access Is A Necessity Not a Luxury

Healthcare is often described as a basic human right. Yet, for nearly half of the world's population, that right remains an empty promise. According to the World Health Organization, approximately 4.5 billion people lack access to essential health services. Each year, nearly 100 million individuals are pushed into extreme poverty simply because they must pay for medical care. Universal health access is not a distant ideal it is a practical necessity that saves lives, strengthens economies, and builds resilient communities.

Universal health access means that every person, regardless of income, location, gender, or age, can receive the healthcare they need without facing financial hardship. This includes preventive services such as vaccinations and routine checkups, primary care for common illnesses, emergency treatment, hospitalization, mental health support, and access to affordable medications. It does not require a single funding model countries such as Canada, Japan, Germany, Rwanda, and Thailand have achieved near-universal coverage through different systems. What matters most is the outcome: no one is left behind because they cannot afford care.

The consequences of inadequate access are reflected in preventable suffering. A mother in a rural village unable to reach a skilled birth attendant. A child with asthma whose family cannot afford an inhaler. A factory worker who ignores chest pain because an ambulance would cost a month's wages. A teenager with depression who has nowhere to turn. These are not isolated incidents they are systemic failures repeated millions of times each year.

Universal health access is also sound economic policy. Healthy children attend school regularly, healthy adults work productively, and healthy

communities attract investment and growth. Studies from the World Bank show that every dollar invested in universal health coverage can generate up to three dollars in economic returns. In contrast, fragmented and exclusionary systems drain national resources while leaving the most vulnerable behind.

Progress is possible. Rwanda has built a community-based insurance system covering over 90 percent of its population, while Thailand's universal coverage scheme has significantly reduced medical impoverishment. These examples demonstrate that political will not national wealth is the key to success.

Universal health access is not a luxury reserved for wealthy nations. It is a necessity for any society that values human dignity, economic opportunity, and shared responsibility. The question is not whether we can afford it, but whether we can afford to wait any longer.



The Brain

By Marilyn Tiphaine

The human brain is the most extraordinary organ ever known; a three-pound universe of staggering complexity that shapes every thought, emotion, memory, and movement we experience. Understanding its structure is not just a matter of scientific curiosity. It is the key to understanding conditions like Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at their deepest biological level.

Encased within the skull and protected by layers of tissue and fluid, the brain is the command centre of the entire human body. It is divided into highly specialised regions, each carrying out distinct and critical functions. The amygdala processes emotion and fear responses. The hippocampus manages the formation and retrieval of memories. The cerebellum coordinates movement and balance. The frontal cortex perhaps the most distinctly human region governs decision-making, social behaviour, and personality.

These regions do not work in isolation. They are connected by billions of neurons,

communicating continuously through synapses microscopic junctions that pass chemical and electrical signals between nerve cells at extraordinary speed. The precision and density of these connections determine how efficiently the brain processes the world around us.

In the brains of autistic individuals, this architecture differs in measurable ways. Research reveals that autistic people have, on average, 17% lower synaptic density across the whole brain compared to neurotypical individuals and the fewer synapses present, the greater the expression of autistic traits tends to be.

Structural differences have also been identified specifically in the amygdala, hippocampus, and corpus callosum the bundle of fibres connecting the brain's two hemispheres. Additionally, imbalances in key neurotransmitters, particularly glutamate and GABA, disrupt how the brain regulates behaviour, emotion, and cognition.

Autism is not a malfunction of the brain it is a different configuration of one of nature's most remarkable creations. The more science understands these differences, the closer we move toward compassionate, targeted support for every autistic individual.



China-Ghana Medical Training & Academic Exchange Center Launched to Strengthen Healthcare Capacity.

The transition ceremony for the 14th and 15th China Medical Team held on 25th March 2026, recorded a historic significance as it witnessed the unveiling of the **China-Ghana Medical Training and Academic Exchange Center** at Lekma Hospital in Accra.

The project which is facilitated by Guangdong Medical University in China in partnership with Lekma Hospital and the Health Community of West Africa Association is set to establish a formal framework enabling Ghanaian medical professionals to pursue specialized training and

academic exchange programs at Guangdong Medical University in China, building upon over a decade of bilateral health cooperation and creating a sustainable pathway for capacity building and mutual learning between the two nations. The center is expected to serve as a hub for continuous professional development, collaborative research, and advanced clinical training.

Beyond clinical services, previous collaborations between Guangdong Medical University in China in partnership with

Lekma Hospital and the Health Community of West Africa Association had already set the tone for this project with webinars and specialized training programs for health professionals such as the first Advanced Training Course in Laparoscopic Surgery, Traditional Chinese Medicine in Gynecology, The use of Artificial Intelligence in Modern Search for Excellence for natural health professionals, Introduction to Artificial Intelligence for Nursing Care and Research in Togo for nurses, Radiographic Analysis and AI in dental X-ray for dental surgeons in Senegal.



The newly launched center now provides a permanent structure to expand these initiatives, ensuring they are no longer isolated events but part of a coordinated academic exchange system.

The presence of senior officials from the Health Commission of Guangdong Province WANG Hongbin, Deputy Director-General; GUO Shengnan, Deputy Director of the Division of Exchange and Cooperation; LIU Jun, President of Guangdong Second Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital; and TONG Kuang, Vice President of Guangdong Medical University alongside senior staff of Lekma Hospital further underscored the importance of the initiative. Their participation strongly emphasized the significance of sustained collaboration in advancing healthcare delivery, strengthening professional capacity, and promoting knowledge exchange between Ghana and China.

Speaking at the launch Deputy Director-General, Health Commission of Guangdong Province, WANG Hongbin also emphasized that since the deployment of Chinese medical teams began in 2010, cooperation has improved maternal care, enhanced surgical

capacity, and enabled staff from Lekma Hospital to train at Guangdong Medical University. The new center consolidates these efforts into a unified framework, strengthening academic mobility and fostering continuous innovation in healthcare delivery.

As the 15th China Medical Team steps into its mission, the China-Ghana Medical Training and Academic Exchange Center stands as a symbol of forward-looking collaboration. It represents more than infrastructure it embodies shared knowledge, professional growth, and a commitment to improving patient outcomes. Through this initiative, Ghanaian medical professionals gain access to specialized training, while Chinese experts benefit from cross-cultural clinical experience, creating a dynamic exchange rooted in partnership and mutual respect.

The launch of the center at Lekma Hospital in partnership with Guangdong Medical University in China and the Health Community of West Africa Association marks a new chapter in China-Ghana healthcare relations one focused on sustainability, academic excellence, and long-term capacity building for the future.



Autism and Pregnancy

By Marilyn Tiphaine

Autism Spectrum Disorder affects women differently than it does men and nowhere is that difference more consequential than during pregnancy. Autistic women are frequently underdiagnosed, their symptoms masked by years of learned social adaptation. By the time many receive a formal diagnosis, they may already be navigating motherhood without the targeted support they need.

During pregnancy, the brain undergoes remarkable changes. Hormonal shifts particularly in estrogen and progesterone directly influence neurotransmitter activity, affecting mood regulation, sensory processing, and anxiety levels. For autistic women, whose brains already process sensory information differently, these hormonal fluctuations can amplify existing challenges significantly.

Sensory sensitivities a hallmark of autism can intensify during pregnancy. Heightened sensitivity to smell, touch, sound, and physical discomfort can make routine prenatal care, including hospital visits and physical examinations, genuinely overwhelming. Many autistic women report that standard maternity environments are not designed with their neurological needs in mind.

Mental health risks are also elevated. Autistic women face higher rates of anxiety and depression during the perinatal period compared to neurotypical women conditions that, left unaddressed, carry serious

implications for both maternal and infant wellbeing.

Research also indicates that autistic women have a higher likelihood of experiencing pregnancy complications, including preeclampsia, gestational diabetes, and preterm birth making attentive, personalized prenatal care not just beneficial but essential.

For healthcare providers, the message is clear. Autistic women deserve tailored antenatal support communication adapted to their needs, sensory-friendly clinical environments, and mental health care integrated into every stage of their maternity journey.

Pregnancy should be a supported experience for every woman. For autistic mothers, that support must be informed, inclusive, and deeply compassionate. As awareness grows, it is essential that healthcare systems begin to recognize and respond to the unique experiences of autistic women, especially during pregnancy.

Early diagnosis, tailored care, and compassionate support can make a profound difference in both maternal and child health outcomes. No woman should have to navigate pregnancy feeling unseen or misunderstood. By closing the gaps in understanding and care, we can ensure that every expectant mother regardless of neurodiversity is empowered, supported, and equipped for a healthy journey into motherhood.

Digestive Disorders in Autism Gain Attention as Experts Call for Better Screening

Digestive health challenges among individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are receiving increased attention from researchers and healthcare professionals, who say gastrointestinal (GI) conditions remain widely underdiagnosed despite their impact on overall well-being.

Studies show that many autistic individuals experience chronic digestive issues, including constipation, diarrhea, abdominal pain, and gastroesophageal reflux. Health experts warn that these conditions can significantly affect behavior, sleep, and quality of life if left untreated.

Emerging research on the gut-brain axis—the link between the digestive system and the brain—has identified differences in the gut microbiome of autistic individuals. Findings indicate reduced bacterial diversity and lower levels of beneficial microbes such as *Bifidobacterium* and *Prevotella*, which researchers believe may contribute to both digestive and behavioral symptoms.

According to Maria Okonkwo, a gastroenterologist involved in recent studies, digestive issues in autism are often overlooked in clinical care. She noted that children who are unable to communicate discomfort verbally may

instead display signs such as irritability, aggression, or sleep disruption.

Healthcare providers say diagnosis is frequently delayed due to communication barriers and sensory sensitivities that make medical examinations difficult. In some cases, physical symptoms are misinterpreted as behavioral or psychological issues, leading to gaps in treatment.

Experts are now advocating for routine gastrointestinal screening as part of standard autism care. Recommended interventions include dietary adjustments, improved hydration, probiotic support, and timely treatment of conditions such as constipation.

In response to growing demand, some healthcare facilities are introducing autism-friendly gastroenterology services designed to accommodate sensory needs and improve patient experience during assessment and treatment.

Specialists say integrating digestive health into autism care could improve patient outcomes and reduce behavioral distress linked to untreated physical discomfort.

Source: Autism Research Journal

Multiple Sclerosis:

When the Body Turns Against Its Own Nerves

Many people have heard of stroke, diabetes, or hypertension, but only a few are familiar with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), a long-term condition that affects the brain, spinal cord, and the nerves that control movement, sensation, and coordination. Despite not being very common, multiple sclerosis remains one of the most unpredictable neurological diseases because it can affect each person in a completely different way.

Multiple sclerosis occurs when the body's immune system mistakenly attacks the myelin sheath, the protective covering around nerve fibers. This covering normally allows electrical signals to travel quickly from the brain to other parts of the body. When it becomes damaged, these signals slow down or stop completely, leading to problems with

movement, vision, balance, and even thinking. What makes this condition unique is that the damage does not happen all at once. It may occur gradually, in episodes, or sometimes without warning.

Why Multiple Sclerosis Is Difficult to Understand

One of the biggest challenges with MS is that its symptoms often look like those of many other diseases. A patient may complain of tiredness, numbness, or blurred vision, which can easily be mistaken for stress, vitamin deficiency, or infection. Because of this, diagnosis is sometimes delayed.

In clinical practice, patients with MS may present with:

- Unexplained weakness in the arms or legs
- Difficulty maintaining balance while walking
- Tingling or loss of sensation
- Double or blurred vision
- Extreme fatigue even after rest
- Problems with memory or concentration

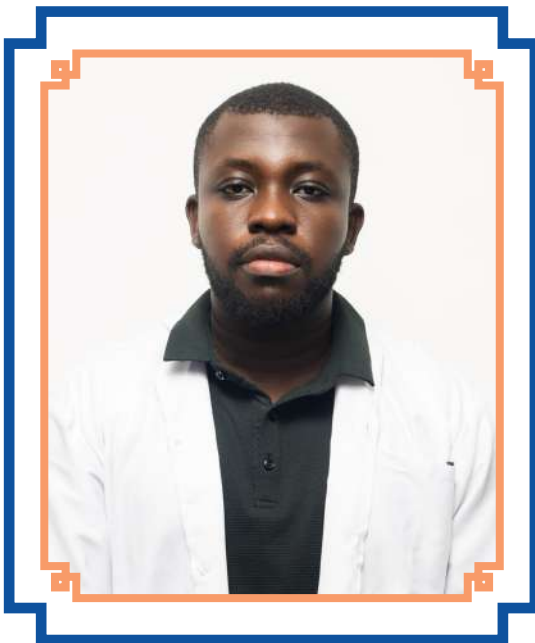
These symptoms may appear, disappear, and return again after weeks or months. This pattern is known as relapse and remission, and it is one of the key features of multiple sclerosis.

Possible Causes and Risk Factors

The exact cause of MS is still not fully known, but research shows that several factors may contribute to its development.

These include:

- Abnormal immune system response
- Genetic tendency in some families
- Viral infections that may trigger the disease
- Low vitamin D levels due to limited sunlight exposure
- Environmental influences



Dr. Kwadwo Danso

Medical Laboratory Scientist-
Essence Clinic and Medical
Laboratory

The disease is most often diagnosed in young adults, especially between the ages of 20 and 40 years, and studies show that women are affected more frequently than men.

How Multiple Sclerosis Is Diagnosed

Diagnosing MS requires careful investigation because no single test can confirm it alone. Doctors usually combine clinical findings with laboratory and imaging tests.

Common investigations include:

- MRI scan to detect damage in the brain or spinal cord
- Blood tests to rule out other conditions
- Examination of cerebrospinal fluid
- Neurological assessment to check reflexes and coordination

From a laboratory point of view, these tests are important because they help exclude infections, autoimmune diseases, and metabolic disorders that may produce similar symptoms.

Treatment Does Not Cure, But It Helps Control the Disease.

There is currently no permanent cure for multiple sclerosis, but modern medicine has made it possible to control the disease and reduce its progression. Treatment may involve:

- Drugs that reduce immune system attack on nerves
- Medicines to control pain, stiffness, or fatigue
- Physiotherapy to maintain muscle strength

- Healthy lifestyle practices such as good nutrition, exercise, and stress control.

Early diagnosis is very important because treatment started at the right time can slow down nerve damage and help the patient live a normal life for many years.

Living With Multiple Sclerosis

Although MS is a chronic condition, it does not mean the end of a productive life. Many people living with multiple sclerosis continue to work, raise families, and stay active. The key to managing the disease is proper medical care, regular monitoring, and strong emotional support.

Public education about multiple sclerosis is still needed, especially in developing countries, where symptoms may be ignored until the disease becomes advanced.

Understanding the condition can help people seek medical attention early and avoid complications.

Multiple sclerosis reminds us that not all diseases are visible from the outside. A person may look healthy but still struggle with nerve damage affecting everyday activities.

With increasing awareness, improved diagnosis, and better treatment options, there is hope that people living with MS can continue to live full and meaningful lives.





Tanzania Intensifies Efforts to Boost Autism Awareness and Inclusion

As global conversations around neurodevelopmental disorders gain momentum, Tanzania is scaling up its efforts to foster greater public understanding and social inclusion for individuals living with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Health advocates and policymakers are pushing for a paradigm shift from mere awareness to tangible acceptance and support systems across the country.

Autism, a complex condition characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech, and nonverbal communication, remains widely misunderstood in many communities. In Tanzania, stigma and misinformation often lead to the isolation of affected individuals and their families. Recognizing this gap, local health organizations and government agencies are now collaborating on initiatives aimed at educating the public, training educators, and improving diagnostic services.

Recent discussions among health stakeholders highlight the urgent need to integrate autism support into primary healthcare. Currently, Tanzania faces a significant shortage of specialists, including child psychologists and occupational therapists, leaving many families in rural areas without access to early intervention services. Early diagnosis is critical, as it allows

for therapies that can dramatically improve a child's development and quality of life.

Beyond the medical sphere, the push for inclusion is extending to classrooms and workplaces. The government is being urged to adopt more inclusive educational policies that accommodate children with special needs, ensuring they are not left behind in the mainstream education system. Advocates argue that inclusion is not merely about physical presence but about adapting environments to allow neurodivergent individuals to thrive. Community-based organizations are also playing a pivotal role. Through social media campaigns and public forums, they are working to dismantle harmful cultural myths surrounding autism. By sharing stories of success and resilience, these groups aim to show that with the right support, individuals with autism can lead fulfilling lives and contribute meaningfully to society.

As Tanzania observes international health milestones this month, the call to action is clear: awareness must translate into action. For families navigating autism, the hope is that increased visibility will lead to a future defined not by stigma, but by empathy, opportunity, and full participation in Tanzanian society.

Source: The Citizen



Autism Is Not a Disease

By Priscilla Akorfa Fomevor

Despite growing awareness of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), a persistent and harmful myth continues to circulate: that autism is a disease. Medical experts, researchers and autistic self-advocates are united in correcting this misconception, emphasizing that autism is not an illness to be cured but a neurodevelopmental variation to be understood and supported.

So what exactly is autism? Autism spectrum disorder is a lifelong condition characterized by differences in brain development that affect how a person communicates, processes sensory information, and interacts with the world. It is classified as a neurodevelopmental disorder in diagnostic manuals—but crucially, a disorder is not the same as a disease. The distinction is fundamental. A disease is typically defined as a pathological condition with a known cause, specific symptoms and ideally a cure. Diseases are acquired or develop due to infection, injury or biological malfunction. Autism, by contrast, is present from birth or early childhood, rooted in genetic and neurological factors, and represents a natural variation in human neurology. There is no pathogen to eliminate, no tissue to repair, and no “normal” state to restore.

When individuals and families mistakenly view autism as a disease, the consequences can be damaging. This misconception often drives desperate searches for unproven, pseudoscientific “cures” ranging from dangerous detoxification

protocols to unregulated biomedical interventions that can cause physical and emotional harm. It also fuels stigma, portraying autistic individuals as broken or incomplete rather than as people with unique strengths, perspectives and needs.

The modern medical and therapeutic community has shifted its approach accordingly. Rather than seeking to eliminate autism, evidence-based interventions focus on supporting autistic individuals in developing communication skills, managing sensory sensitivities and building independence. The goal is not a cure but improved quality of life, self-advocacy, and inclusion.

Importantly, many autistic self-advocates reject the disease narrative entirely. They argue that much of the difficulty associated with autism arises not from the condition itself but from a world built for neurotypical minds—a world filled with sensory overload, rigid social expectations, and insufficient accommodations. From this perspective, the most pressing need is not medical “treatment” but societal acceptance, accessibility, and respect.

Autism is not contagious, not acquired and not curable nor does it need to be. By moving beyond outdated disease-based language, society can take a crucial step toward replacing stigma with understanding and exclusion with genuine inclusion.



Mental Health Reality of Autism

By Priscilla Akorfa Fomevor

When we speak about autism spectrum disorder, the conversation often begins and ends with core traits such as differences in social communication, intense interests and repetitive movements. While these characteristics shape an autistic person's daily experience, they represent only part of a much larger picture. Beneath the diagnosis lies a reality that families, clinicians and educators cannot afford to ignore: the majority of autistic individuals also navigate one or more co-occurring mental health conditions.

Research consistently demonstrates that anxiety disorders, depression and obsessive-compulsive symptoms occur at significantly higher rates among autistic people than among the general population. Some studies suggest that up to seventy or even eighty percent of autistic children and adults will experience a clinically significant mental health condition in their lifetime. Social anxiety, for example, is extremely common, often driven by years of painful social misunderstandings, bullying or the sheer exhaustion of masking—the deliberate hiding of autistic traits to fit into neurotypical environments. Over time, this chronic stress frequently deepens into major depression, particularly among

autistic adolescents and adults who feel profoundly isolated despite their best efforts to connect.

Tragically, one of the greatest barriers to proper care is a phenomenon known as diagnostic overshadowing. This occurs when a person's emotional distress or behavioral changes are incorrectly attributed to autism itself rather than to a treatable mental health condition. A sudden increase in repetitive behaviors may be dismissed as simply an autistic trait when it is actually a desperate signal of severe anxiety or trauma. Withdrawal from social situations may be labeled an inherent feature of autism rather than recognized as the hallmark of a depressive episode. Because of this oversight, many autistic individuals go years without receiving appropriate therapy or medication for conditions that could otherwise be effectively managed.

Effective mental health support for autistic people is not only possible but essential. It requires clinicians who are specifically trained to recognize how anxiety and depression present differently in autistic patients. It demands therapeutic approaches, such as adapted cognitive-behavioral therapy, that respect autistic

communication styles and sensory needs. Most of all, it asks us to see the whole person—autism and all—without using the diagnosis as an excuse to ignore suffering. When we look beyond the diagnosis, we finally see what has been there all along: not a disorder to be managed, but a human being deserving of complete mental health care.

The Skin and Autism

By Marilyn Tiphaine

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is primarily known for affecting communication and behaviour, but growing evidence shows it may also influence skin health in important ways. Research highlights a strong link between autism and skin conditions, particularly those involving inflammation and barrier dysfunction.

Studies indicate that individuals with autism are more likely to experience inflammatory skin disorders such as eczema and psoriasis. In some cases, up to 25% of children with autism have atopic dermatitis, while allergic skin conditions are significantly more common compared to the general population. These conditions are not just coincidental they are connected through the body's immune system.

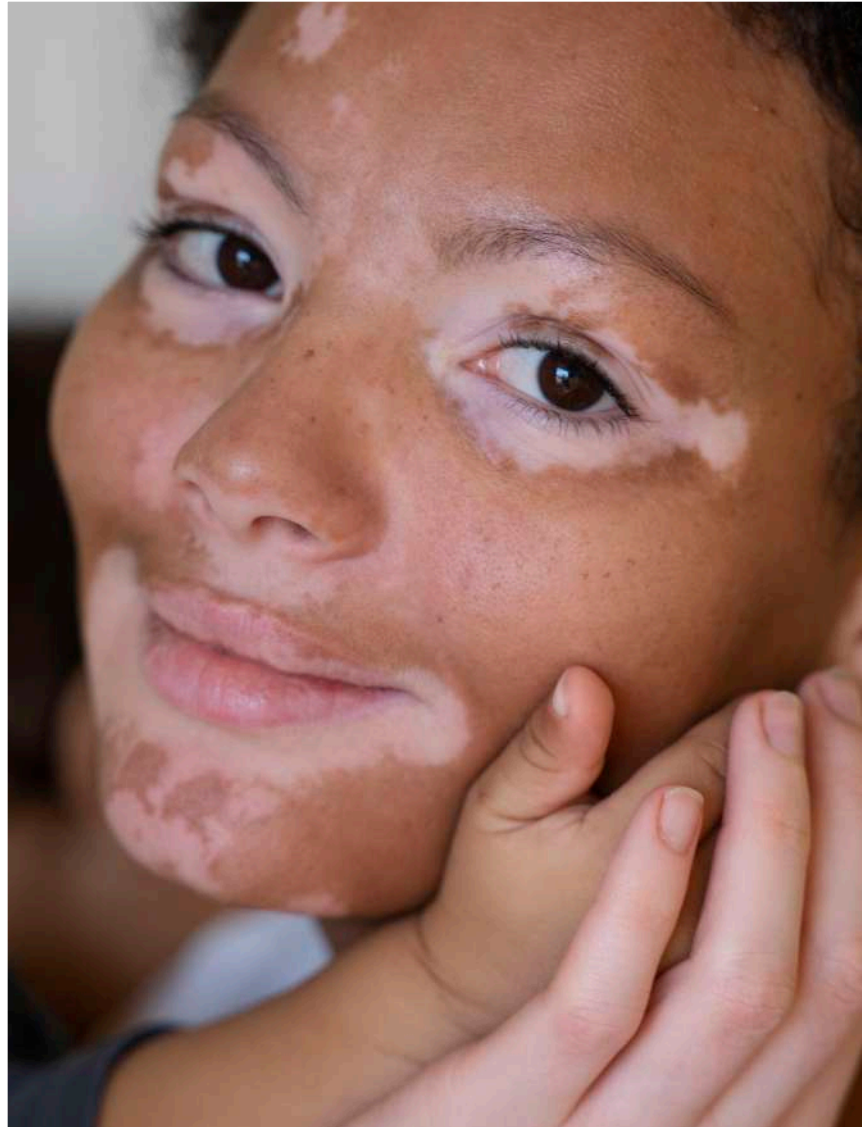
One key factor is chronic inflammation. People with autism often have higher levels of inflammatory markers in both the skin and bloodstream. This inflammation can weaken the skin's protective barrier, leading to dryness, irritation, and increased sensitivity. Research also shows that individuals with autism may have reduced skin hydration and increased water loss, making the skin more prone to damage.

Interestingly, the relationship works both ways. Skin dysfunction may also contribute to worsening autism symptoms by increasing inflammation that affects the brain. In fact, improving skin health has been shown to help reduce some behavioural symptoms in children with autism.

What Can Be Done?

Managing skin health in individuals with autism is essential for overall wellbeing. Key approaches include:

- Regular moisturising: Using emollients helps restore the skin barrier and reduce dryness.
- Treating skin conditions early: Prompt care for eczema or rashes can prevent complications.



- Gentle skincare routines: Avoid harsh soaps and irritants that can worsen sensitivity.
- Monitoring inflammation: Medical guidance may be needed to manage underlying immune responses.
- Ensuring good nutrition: Nutrients like vitamin D may support skin and immune health.

Skin health is an often-overlooked aspect of autism care. By addressing inflammation and maintaining a healthy skin barrier, it is possible not only to improve skin conditions but also to support overall health and quality of life for individuals with autism.

2026

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Everything You Need to Know About the Essence HPV Rapid Test

The **Essence HPV Antigen Rapid Test** stands out as a practical, efficient and accessible screening tool designed to support healthcare professionals in identifying Human Papillomavirus (HPV) infections quickly and reliably.

The Essence HPV Antigen Rapid Test is a qualitative, lateral flow immunoassay developed for the detection of HPV L1 Capsid protein in female cervical swab specimens. Designed strictly for professional in vitro diagnostic use, the test delivers results within just 15 minutes, making it highly suitable for clinical environments where timely decision-making is essential. Its rapid turnaround time significantly improves workflow in healthcare settings, allowing more patients to be screened in less time without compromising efficiency.

One of the key strengths of the Essence HPV Antigen Rapid Test is its ease of use. The test does not require complex laboratory equipment or advanced technical infrastructure. Instead, it

relies on a simple procedure involving specimen extraction, application to a test device and visual interpretation of results.

Each kit comes complete with essential components, including a test device, extraction solution and sterile swabs, ensuring that healthcare providers have everything needed to perform the test efficiently. This simplicity makes the test particularly valuable in resource-limited settings, where access to sophisticated diagnostic tools may be restricted.

The test operates using a membrane-based immunoassay principle. It utilizes specific monoclonal antibodies to detect HPV antigens in cervical samples. When HPV antigens are present, a visible colored line appears in the test region, indicating a positive result. A control line is also included to confirm that the test has functioned properly.



The clear visual readout minimizes ambiguity, enabling healthcare professionals to interpret results with confidence. Additionally, the built-in internal quality control ensures that each test is functioning correctly, enhancing reliability.

The Essence HPV Antigen Rapid Test is designed to detect multiple HPV types associated with cervical disease, including types 6, 11, 16, 18, 31, 33, 45, 52 and 58. This broad detection capability makes it a valuable screening tool for identifying individuals at risk of cervical pre-cancer and cancer.

While the test provides important preliminary results, it is intended to be used as an aid in diagnosis. Positive results should always be followed by confirmatory testing and clinical evaluation to ensure accurate diagnosis and appropriate management.

By providing fast and accessible screening results, the Essence HPV Antigen Rapid Test enables healthcare providers to make timely clinical decisions. Early identification of HPV infection allows for closer monitoring, further testing, and early intervention where necessary. This is particularly

important in settings where delayed diagnosis can lead to disease progression and more complex treatment needs.

The test is designed with safety and quality in mind. Proper specimen collection, handling and adherence to testing procedures are essential for accurate results. It is recommended for use by trained healthcare professionals who can ensure that all guidelines are followed. The inclusion of internal quality control features further supports accurate testing and helps reduce the risk of invalid results.

The Essence HPV Antigen Rapid Test represents a significant advancement in point-of-care diagnostics. Its combination of speed, simplicity and reliability makes it a valuable tool in expanding access to HPV screening and improving early detection efforts. As healthcare systems continue to prioritize preventive care, solutions like this rapid test play an essential role in making screening more efficient and widely accessible.



Promoting Inclusive Healthcare For Autistic Men

By Alberta Okyere

Discussions about men's health often focus on physical conditions like heart disease, prostate cancer, or workplace injuries. Rarely do they consider the challenges faced by men on the autism spectrum, despite the fact that millions of men and boys navigate life with a neurodevelopmental condition that affects communication, social interaction, and sensory processing. Inclusive healthcare practices are essential to ensure these men receive the care they need.

Autistic men face significant barriers to healthcare. Studies show they experience higher rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide than the general population, and chronic conditions such as epilepsy and hypertension are more prevalent.

Sensory sensitivities make clinical environments overwhelming, and communication differences can lead doctors to misinterpret behavior as noncompliance. Past negative experiences often discourage autistic men from seeking care, further widening health disparities.

Access alone is not enough. Healthcare providers must adopt autism-informed practices. Recognizing that behaviors such as avoiding eye contact or using a monotone voice are not rudeness but part of a neurodivergent profile is crucial. Small accommodations written in instructions, longer appointments, and dimmed lighting can make medical visits far less stressful and more productive.



Mental health support is equally critical. Many autistic men feel pressure to “mask” their traits forcing eye contact, suppressing stimming, or mimicking neurotypical behavior which can lead to burnout, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts. Inclusive men’s health initiatives must normalize neurodiversity and encourage men to embrace their authentic selves.

By providing sensory-friendly environments, training medical staff in neurodiversity, and promoting awareness, healthcare systems can improve outcomes for autistic men. Every man deserves medical care that respects his individuality, supports his mental and physical health, and allows him to live authentically without compromise.

Inclusive healthcare is not just a matter of access it is a matter of equity, dignity, and effectiveness.



Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a developmental condition that affects how a person communicates, interacts with others, and experiences the world. It is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition that shapes how a person thinks, learns, and interacts. Autism affects social and communication skills. However, people with autism may also shine in areas like music, mathematics, or art. Famous people who have been diagnosed with autism include Vernon Smith, Tim Burton and Susan Boyle.

The actual cause of autism is unknown, but its associated causative factors include a strong family history or genetics, brain development and environmental factors such as maternal health, exposure to toxins, or complications during pregnancy or birth.



Dr Candace Appiah

Paediatric Resident - Greater Accra Regional Hospital

Autism is called a spectrum because it can present in many forms with varying severity. Some characteristics that show a person is autistic include limited eye contact, difficulty understanding social cues, delayed speech or difficulty starting and maintaining conversations. They may also have repetitive behaviour such as repeating words, repetitive hand movements such as hand-flapping or rocking. They may be distressed when their routines are interfered with. They are sensitive to stimuli such sound, light and textures. They have a keen interest or focus on a particular activity or subject. Infants and toddlers, show lack of response to their name, limited smiling, or reduced interest in social interaction.

The diagnosis of autism is made by developmental paediatricians, psychologists and other health experts using special screening and diagnostic forms which contain specific questions. They also perform examinations to identify risk factors or any associated condition.

Early diagnosis is crucial because when interventions are made at a younger age, there is a higher likelihood to develop essential communication and social skills.

Autism currently has no cure but there are interventions to reduce its impact such as occupational therapy, behavioural therapy and speech therapy. There is also the need for communication and educational support which includes special education and assistive communication devices. There is the need for family support and community inclusion.

Parents and relatives must educate themselves on the condition, be supportive of their wards and join support groups which encourage and empower them. Teachers can foster inclusive classrooms by adapting teaching methods and encouraging peer understanding. Public awareness campaigns and community programs can reduce stigma. Employers can create opportunities by recognizing the unique skills individuals with autism bring.

Raising awareness is essential in creating equity for people with autism. Schools, workplaces, and society at large must embrace, accept and understand autism. Individuals with autism have unique strengths and perspectives, and when given the right support, they can thrive.

Increased awareness leads to greater acceptance and ultimately, a more inclusive world for everyone.



Universal Health Access: Where You Live May Determine Your Access to Healthcare

Introduction

Imagine two people experiencing the same medical emergency at the same time—one in a well-equipped European city and the other in a rural community in West Africa. One receives care within minutes; the other may wait an hour or more. That difference is not just geography—it is about access.

Universal health access seeks to ensure that everyone receives the care they need without financial hardship. Yet, despite global progress, access to timely and quality healthcare still varies widely and often determines patient survival. Healthcare Accessibility Across Continents
Healthcare access can be measured using

indicators such as ambulance response times, doctor-to-patient ratios, and service coverage. In North America, ambulance response targets are around 8 minutes for life-threatening emergencies, with actual times ranging from 8–15 minutes in urban areas. Rural regions may experience longer delays. Physician density averages 26–28 per 10,000 people, reflecting relatively strong systems, though cost barriers remain a concern.

Europe maintains some of the most efficient systems globally. Countries like Germany and the United Kingdom record response times of 7–10 minutes for critical cases. Most operate under universal health coverage, with physician density often exceeding 35 per 10,000 people. However, rural populations may still face delays.

In Asia, countries such as Japan and South Korea offer efficient services, with urban response times averaging 8–10 minutes. However, in countries like India, response times can range from 15–25 minutes, and rural areas often lack structured emergency systems.

South America shows moderate progress. In Brazil, response times in major cities range between 10–20 minutes, while rural areas in countries like Peru and Bolivia may face delays of up to an hour. Physician distribution also remains uneven.

Africa faces the greatest challenges. In countries like Nigeria, response times range from 30–60 minutes in cities and over an hour in rural areas. In many regions, up to 70–80% of the population lacks access to formal emergency services. Physician density is critically low, often below 5 per 10,000 people.



Seth O. Konadu

Respiratory Therapist

Why Healthcare Access Is Poor in West Africa

The situation in West Africa is shaped by weak policies and limited investment. Many healthcare systems are underfunded, leaving hospitals without adequate equipment and rural areas underserved. Emergency and referral systems are often inefficient or nonexistent.

Healthcare workers also operate under difficult conditions, including long hours, low pay, and limited resources. This leads to burnout and reduced efficiency, further affecting the quality of care.

Low Health Insurance Uptake: Ghana in Focus

Ghana’s National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) was introduced to improve access, but enrollment remains inconsistent. Many people only renew their insurance when they fall ill. Concerns about cost, service delays, and lack of trust discourage continuous participation. This often results in late hospital visits, where conditions are more severe and harder to manage.

The Way Forward

Improving healthcare access requires increased

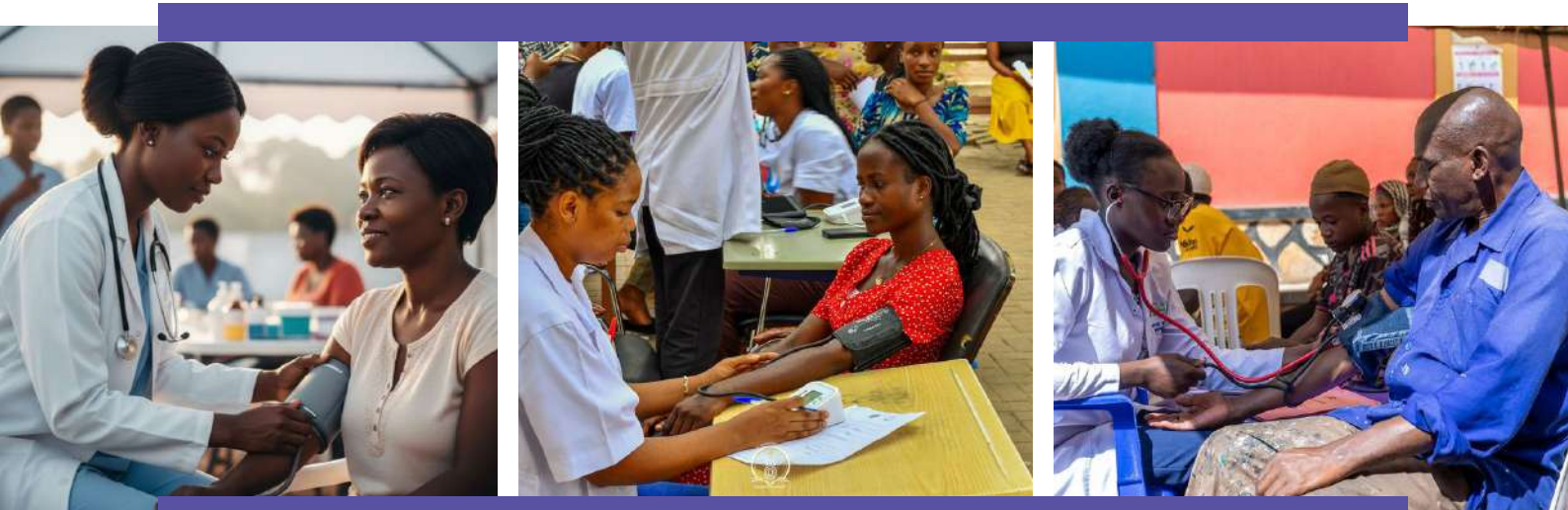
government investment in infrastructure, especially in rural areas. Functional ambulance systems and efficient referral networks are essential.

Better working conditions, fair compensation, and continuous training for healthcare workers can improve service delivery. Public education and policy reforms are also needed to boost health insurance enrollment.

Additionally, technology such as telemedicine can help bridge access gaps in underserved communities.

Conclusion

Access to healthcare should not depend on location, yet disparities persist. While developed regions benefit from efficient systems, many parts of Africa—especially West Africa—continue to struggle. Addressing these challenges requires collective action. In the end, timely healthcare is not a luxury—it is a necessity.



The Brain-Boost Breakfast Bowl

A simple recipe packed with omega-3s, fiber and gut-loving nutrients good for the whole family.

Ingredients

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1½ cups water or dairy-free milk (oat milk or almond milk work great)
- ½ banana, sliced
- ¼ cup mixed berries (blueberries, strawberries)
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds or flaxseeds
- 1 drizzle of honey or maple syrup

Instructions

1. Cook rolled oats in water or dairy-free milk over medium heat for 3–5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
2. Pour into a bowl and let cool slightly.
3. Top with sliced banana and mixed berries.
4. Sprinkle chia seeds or flaxseeds on top.
5. Finish with a light drizzle of honey or maple syrup to taste.



Handling Autism as a Family

By Alberta Okyere

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that influences how individuals communicate, interact socially, and perceive the world through their senses. For families, learning that a child has autism can bring a complex mix of emotions relief, confusion, worry, and love all at once. Yet, understanding autism as a family unit is one of the most powerful ways to create a supportive and nurturing home environment.

Family health extends beyond physical well-being to include emotional support, acceptance, and education. When a family member is on the autism spectrum, every household member is affected. Siblings may feel uncertain or overlooked, parents often navigate exhaustion from therapies and advocacy, and grandparents might struggle when traditional parenting approaches don't work. This makes collective autism awareness vital for the health of the entire family. Gaining knowledge about autism together

fosters empathy and reduces frustration. Recognizing that a child's meltdown stems from sensory overload rather than "bad behavior" can transform parental responses. Understanding that repetitive movements, such as rocking or hand-flapping, are self-soothing techniques helps siblings respond with patience instead of misunderstanding. Families that embrace neurodiversity celebrate differences and uncover unique strengths where others might see challenges.

Practical strategies include reading age-appropriate books about autism together, joining support groups, and implementing visual schedules to help the autistic family member feel secure. Encouraging open conversations, where every feeling is acknowledged, builds trust and connection. Ultimately, autism does not weaken a family it reshapes it. With awareness, patience, and unconditional love, families can grow closer, advocate effectively, and ensure every member feels valued, understood, and supported for who they truly are.



Exploring the Medical Dimensions of a Cultural and Stylish Practice

Ear Piercing

Ear piercing is one of the oldest forms of body modification, practiced for thousands of years across civilizations. From ancient Egyptian pharaohs who wore earrings as symbols of status to Persian soldiers depicted in Persepolis carvings, the practice has carried deep cultural significance. In many ancient societies, piercing was believed to offer spiritual protection—metal in the ears was thought to prevent evil spirits from entering the body. Today, ear piercing remains a widespread practice, with over 80% of Africans and Westerners, particularly

African Americans, having pierced ears. In Ghana, piercing is common across all ages and cultures, especially in the northern regions, where it holds enduring traditional value.

The Modern Piercing Procedure

Contemporary ear piercing follows a standardized process designed to ensure safety and precision. The journey begins with consultation and jewelry selection, where clients choose hypoallergenic studs made of titanium or 14k gold. The piercer then dons disposable gloves and thoroughly cleans the ear with an antiseptic solution. Using a single-use marker, the exact piercing spot is marked, and the client confirms placement before the procedure begins.

Professional piercers typically use either a sterile hollow needle—preferred for cleaner channels and better healing—or a hand-pressurized cartridge device. After the piercing, the area is cleaned, and written aftercare instructions are provided.

Types of Piercings and Healing

The earlobe remains the most common piercing site, typically healing within six to eight weeks. Cartilage piercings, including helix piercings on the outer rim and conch piercings on the shell-shaped area, take longer to heal and may involve more discomfort. Proper aftercare—including regular cleaning with saline solution and avoiding touching the area—is essential to prevent infection.



**Major Oteng
Wiafe Edward**

ENT SPECIALIST Surgeon (Otolaryngology)

When Things Go Wrong: Repairing Torn Piercings

Heavy earrings, accidental tugs, or improper care can lead to torn piercings. For minor tears, allowing the area to heal while keeping it clean may suffice. However, more significant damage often requires surgical intervention.

Surgical repair of a torn earlobe is typically performed by a dermatologist or plastic surgeon. The procedure begins with thorough cleaning of the ear using disinfectant and alcohol. A local anesthetic, often containing adrenaline to minimize bleeding, is injected at the site. Using a size 11 scalpel blade, the surgeon carefully removes dead tissue and scar tissue along the tear margins, ensuring precision to achieve proper correction.

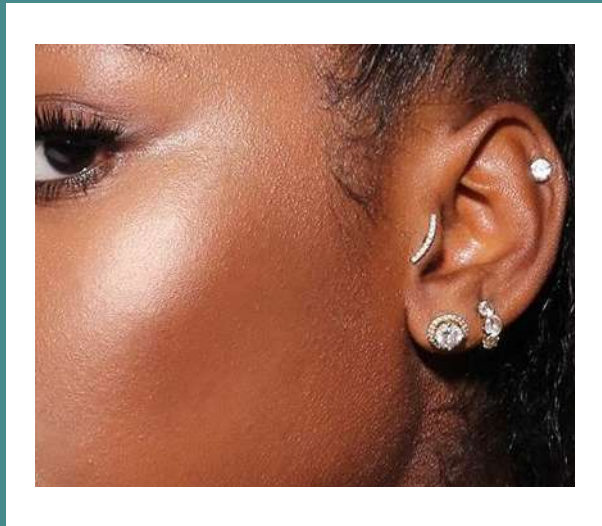
In cases of complete earlobe tear, markings are made before anesthesia to guide accurate alignment. Once damaged tissue is excised, the

wound is meticulously stitched closed. Patients are usually asked to return for review after one week, at which point stitches are removed and healing is assessed.

Aftercare and Prevention

Infection remains the most common complication following both piercing and surgical repair. Doctors typically provide detailed home care instructions, including keeping the area clean and dry, applying prescribed antibiotic ointments, and avoiding pressure or trauma to the site.

To prevent piercing tears, experts recommend avoiding heavy earrings, removing earrings carefully, and maintaining proper hygiene. Whether considering a first piercing or seeking repair for a damaged one, choosing a reputable professional and following aftercare instructions are essential steps toward safe outcomes.



The Power of Movement:

Fitness as a Tool for Autism Awareness.

By Marilyn Tiphaine

When we think about supporting individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), we often focus on therapy and medication. But one of the most powerful and accessible tools available is also one of the simplest physical exercise. Research increasingly shows that regular fitness activity offers profound benefits for autistic individuals, touching everything from brain function to social skills and emotional well-being.

Exercise does more than build muscle it directly stimulates the nervous system. Physical activity therapies in children with ASD can stimulate different areas of the brain through external stimuli, positively acting on cognitive, behavioral, and motor skills. Exercise also boosts levels of Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor (BDNF), a key protein linked to brain health, which is often lower in individuals with ASD and is associated with the severity of their symptoms.

The evidence is compelling. Studies show that physical activity and exercise programs for children on the autism spectrum provide moderate to significant benefits in areas that are crucially important. These include improved endurance,

muscular strength, body coordination, balance, and visual-motor control. Beyond the physical, exercise helps reduce stereotypical behaviors and internal anxiety, while also enhancing social communication skills. One study found that just 30 minutes of aerobic exercise led to improved concentration, organizational skills, and attention in children with ASD.

Not all activities suit every child, but some popular options include swimming, dancing, jumping, cycling, and yoga. These activities provide sensory input, build routine, and offer safe environments for social interaction with peers all critical elements for autistic individuals.

Promoting fitness for autistic individuals is also an act of awareness. When communities build inclusive fitness programs and adapted physical education, they send a powerful message: everybody deserves to move, grow, and thrive. Exercise is not just health it is empowerment.

Health Terms under Tuberculosis

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) involves differences in how people communicate, interact and experience the world. Understanding a few key terms can make it easier to follow discussions about autism, whether in articles, appointments, or support settings:

1. Neurodevelopmental disorder: The category ASD falls under; conditions related to brain development and function.

2. Stimming (Self-stimulatory behavior): Repetitive movements or sounds (hand flapping, rocking, repeating words) used for self-regulation.

3. Executive function: Mental skills for planning, focus, and multitasking, which can be affected in ASD.

4. Sensory processing: How the brain receives and responds to sensory input; many autistic people experience hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity.

5. Echolalia: Repetition of words or phrases heard from others, common in language development in ASD.

6. Social communication: The use of verbal and nonverbal skills to interact; a core area of difference in ASD.

7. Comorbidity: The presence of additional conditions alongside ASD

(e.g., ADHD, anxiety, epilepsy).

8. Theory of mind: The ability to understand others' thoughts/feelings; often described as a challenge area in ASD.

9. Meltdown: An involuntary neurological response to overwhelm (sensory, emotional), distinct from a tantrum.

10. Early intervention: Therapies and supports (speech therapy, occupational therapy, ABA) started in early childhood to improve outcomes.

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