Original Research Article

Prevalence of Autism in Patients Who Reported for Disability

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Autism is a disorder with stereotyped behaviors, reduced communication skills and problems in social development. There is also high incidence of intellectual disability among the autistic individuals. However, the prevalence is increasing which may be due to changes in diagnostic procedures, practice and standards, or due to increase in incidence or may be due to diagnostic over substitution.
Aim: To study prevalence of autism in patient who reported for disability.
Materials & Methods: The present study is a retrospective study which was conducted over a period of 2 and half year from July 2017 to December 2019 among all the patients who reported for disability in the Government Psychiatric Diseases Hospital Jammu. After getting clearance from the institutional ethical committee the records of all these patients seen during this period were reviewed and the diagnosis of all these patients was confirmed according to ICD 10.
Results: The prevalence of autism in patients who reported for disability was 64.5%. 76.1% autistic patients were males whereas 23.9% were females. 69% autistic patients were below 6 years of age followed by 26.8% who were in the age group of 7 to 12 years and only 4.2% patients were between 13 to 18 years of age.
Conclusion: From present study we conclude that there is high prevalence of autism among the patients who reported for disability. Hence appropriate measures should be taken up by the concerned authorities for the early identification of children with autism so that early intervention for the better outcome can be done.

Keywords: Autism, Disability, Prevalence.

INTRODUCTION

Autism is a disorder with stereotyped behaviors, reduced communication skills and problems in social development. There is also high incidence of intellectual disability among the autistic individuals. Earliest studies has considered it as rare entity with prevalence about 4.5 per 10000.[1] However the prevalence is increasing which may be due to changes in diagnostic procedures, practice and standards, or due to increase in incidence or may be due to diagnostic oversubstitution.[2]

In developing nations like India, there are many hurdles in finding the prevalence of Autism. In India, neither the health insurance is mandatory nor the health registries are maintained. Due to overpopulation, there is poor access to healthcare especially in rural and remote areas. Hence in relation to their child's development even if parents have any concerns, it is very difficult for them to get the required intervention. Among health professionals, there is also poor awareness regarding Autism.[3] In majority of case, the parents are either refuse to acknowledge or

unable to identify that their child has a disability. Parents may disregard it even when pointed out by doctors or teachers.[4] To get a diagnosis of autism it may take upto three years after the first visit to health professionals.[5] Hence the present study was conducted to find prevalence of autism in patient who reported for disability.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is a retrospective study which was conducted over a period of 2 and half year from July 2017 to December 2019 among all the patients who reported for disability in the Government Psychiatric Diseases Hospital Jammu. After getting clearance from the institutional ethical committee the records of all these patients seen during this period were reviewed and the diagnosis of all these patients was confirmed according to ICD 10.[6] All patients who were referred from various hospitals/centres for assessment of disability were included in the study whereas patients who were above 18 years were excluded from the study.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Analysis of data was done using statistical software MS Excel / SPSS version 17.0 for windows. Data presented as percentage (%) as discussed appropriate for quantitative and qualitative variables.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows prevalence of Autism in patients who reported for disability

Total number of patients reported for disability	110
Number of patients who received the diagnosis of Autism	71
Prevalence of Autism in patients who reported for disability	64.5%

Table 1 shows that the prevalence of autism in patients who reported for disability was 64.5%.

Table 2 shows gender wise distribution of autistic patients

Gender	Number of patients	Percentage
Male	54	76.1%
Female	17	23.9%
Total	71	100%

Table 2 shows that 76.1% autistic patients were males whereas 23.9% were females.

Table 3 shows age wise distribution of autistic patients

Age (in years)	Number of patients	Percentage
0-6	49	69%
7-12	19	26.8%
13-18	3	4.2%
Total	71	100%

Table 3 shows that 69% autistic patients were below 6 years of age followed by 26.8% who were in the age group of 7 to 12 years and only 4.2% patients were between 13 to 18 years of age.

DISCUSSION

Among the patients who reported for disability, the prevalence of autism was found to be 64.5%. The prevalence of autism in our study is much higher when compared to previous studies which had reported prevalence of autism to be less than 1%.[6-11] The reason for this could be that the previous studies had observed prevalence of autism in general population whereas we had observed prevalence in those patients who reported for disability and when compared to general population, patients who reported for disability have higher prevalence of autism as suggested by Ramanujam et al who reported 23.7% prevalence of autism among the children's with intellectual disability.[12] Better diagnostic abilities of medical professionals and increased awareness of parents may be the other reasons for increased prevalence.[7]

In the present study, 76.1% autistic patients were males and 23.9% were females. There may be biological preponderance of autism towards males.[12] Our finding is well supported by Arun P and Chavan BS who observed that majority of the autistic patients were males.[7] Similar result were also observed in other studies.[8-12]

Majority of the autistic patients i.e. 69% were below 6 years, 26.8% were between 7 to 12 years whereas only 4.2% were between 13 to 18 years. Arun P and Chavan BS had also that 52.6% of autistic children were between 4yrs to 7 yrs[7] whereas

Ramanujam et al had observed higher prevalence of autism in older age groups.[12]

CONCLUSION

From present study we conclude that there is high prevalence of autism among the patients who reported for disability. There may be under diagnosis of autism due to lack of awareness. Hence appropriate measures should be taken up by the concerned authorities for the early identification of children with autism so that early intervention for the better outcome can be done.

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