
About.com Autism

Autism Blog

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Proposed New Diagnostic Criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder: Brief, to Say the Least

Wednesday February 10, 2010

If the physicians involved with developing the new *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), due out in May 2013, have their way, autism diagnoses will look very different.

To begin with, the new DSM will completely get rid of the diagnosis [Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified \(PDD-NOS\)](#)¹. Quite honestly, few of us (even those of us with kids who have the diagnosis) will miss this vague, confusing label.

Secondly, and more significantly, the new DSM will eradicate the diagnosis of [Asperger syndrome](#)². This is a much more controversial move, as people with Asperger syndrome and their loved ones have grown to identify strongly with the term - and many see themselves as having characteristics that are quite distinct from autistic disorder.

Thirdly, the new DSM will simplify the criteria for diagnosing autism spectrum disorders to the point where, from where I sit, it seems that half the population could be appropriately diagnosed (depending upon individual practitioners' definitions of the terms "clinically significant" and "persistent").

Here are the [proposed criteria](#)³:

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Must meet criteria 1, 2, and 3:

1. *Clinically significant, persistent deficits in social communication and interactions, as manifest by all of the following:*

- a. Marked deficits in nonverbal and verbal communication used for social interaction:
- b. Lack of social reciprocity;
- c. Failure to develop and maintain peer relationships appropriate to developmental level

2. *Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, and activities, as manifested by at least TWO of the following:*

- a. Stereotyped motor or verbal behaviors, or unusual sensory behaviors
- b. Excessive adherence to routines and ritualized patterns of behavior
- c. Restricted, fixated interests