

Repercussion of the COVID-19 pandemic in the treatment of patients with autism spectrum disorder: A case report



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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a biologically based neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by interaction and

communication deficits, as well as restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviors and interests. **CASE REPORT:** We describe the clinical history of a patient with a late diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder and correlate the worsening of the clinical picture with the isolation associated with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. **CONCLUSION:** There is a relevant association between the COVID-19 pandemic and the worsening of the symptoms of the autism spectrum observed in the patient, mainly due to the inconsistency of the multidisciplinary treatment based on the disorder.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder, COVID-19, Multiprofessional team, Early diagnosis.

1 INTRODUCTION

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a bio-based neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by persistent deficits in social interaction and communication observed in different environments, as well as restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, and activities. ASD can be classified to varying degrees depending on the level of impairment and associated functional impairment.

2 OBJECTIVE

To report the case of T. R. S., a patient with ASD diagnosed at the age of 32 years.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 CASE REPORT

3.1.1 Description of the Clinical Case

Female patient, T.R.S., 35 years old, white, deaf from birth due to the occurrence of rubella during pregnancy and molt. At the age of 10, he began psychiatric treatment for aggression and insomnia without, however, obtaining a diagnosis of autism. Other clinical signs associated at the time were repetitive movements, lack of social communication and interaction, restricted and specific interest in assembly toys, and total dependence on performing daily activities. From the psychiatric



follow-up, she is referred to the daily assistance of the APAE (Association of Parents and Friends of the Exceptional) in the municipality of Lagarto – Sergipe, an institution directed to the psycho-pedagogical and social development of patients with intellectual or multiple disabilities. As a result, she showed clinical improvement in social interaction and autonomy: decreased isolation and aggressiveness, learning eating behaviors (transporting some foods to the mouth), and personal hygiene (own toothbrushing, gestures indicative of the need to go to the bathroom). Only at the age of 32 years, he was diagnosed with ASD, initiating appropriate pharmacological treatment, but without significant results. After the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the trips to the APAE ceased, making the patient deprived of the multidisciplinary care offered by the institution. Currently, she has not been to the place for almost 3 years, presenting worsening behavioral patterns characteristic of ASD, especially aggressiveness (excessive self-mutilation and hostility to others), social isolation, and insomnia. Drugs in use: haloperidol 5 mg (2x/day), promethazine 25 mg (2x/day), chlorpromazine hydrochloride 25 mg (2x/day), sodium valproate 250 mg (2x/day), and levomepromazine 100 mg (2x/day).

4 CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected the patient in question by depriving her of essential care for her psychosocial development, an aspect evidenced by the worsening of the clinical picture. Thus, it is reinforced that therapeutic management with a multidisciplinary team is fundamental for the treatment of patients with ASD. It is also noteworthy that an early diagnosis, by allowing the early institution of this type of follow-up, contributes to a better prognosis from the biopsychosocial point of view.



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