

Medical Encounters with Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Perceptions and Practices of Filipino Physicians

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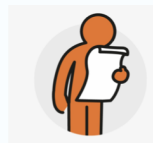
INTRODUCTION

Due to the increasing number of patients with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in our population, Filipino physicians need to be equipped not only with medical knowledge but the attitude and mindset in caring for these individuals to improve health care services.

METHODOLOGY

This is a cross-sectional research study which employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. It aimed to assess the knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of Filipino physicians and describe their medical encounters with patients with ASD.

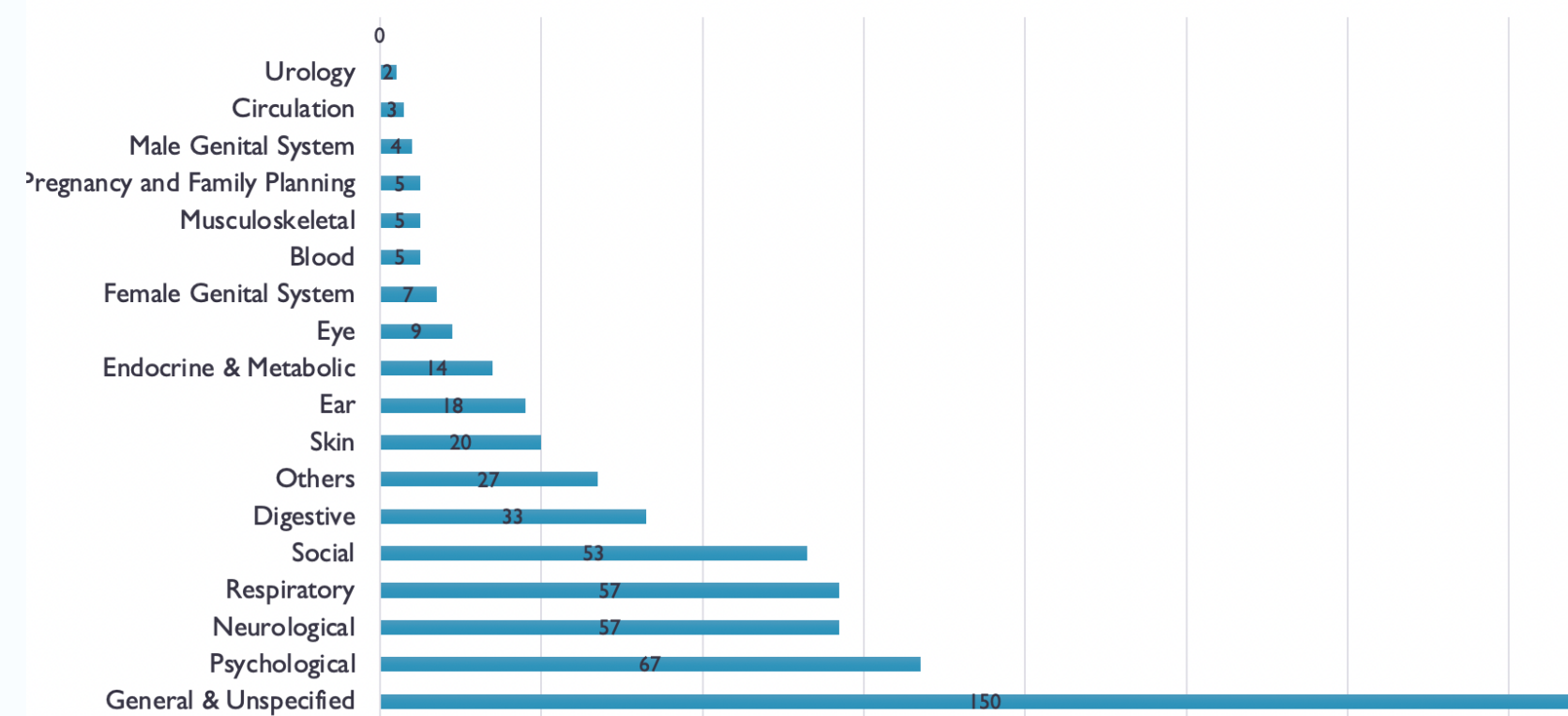
RESULTS



Characteristics of Encounter (n=246)

Characteristics	Statistics
Number of ASD Patients Encountered	n (%)
< 10	129 (52.4 %)
10 - 20	65 (26.4 %)
> 20	52 (21.1 %)
Age of Suspected ASD Patients Encountered	
< 3 y	81 (14.9%)
3 - 5 y	139 (25.7%)
6 - 12 y	154 (28.5 %)
13 - 18 y	92 (17%)
> 18 y	75 (13.9%)
Sex of Majority of ASD Patients	n (%)
Female	31 (12.6 %)
Male	215 (87.4 %)
ASD Patients Independent?	n (%)
Yes	150 (61.0 %)
No	96 (39.0 %)
Location of Encounter	
Clinic	206 (57.2%)
Emergency Room	48 (13.3%)
Wards	74 (20.6%)
Other	32 (8.9%)

Figure 1. Reasons for Medical Encounter

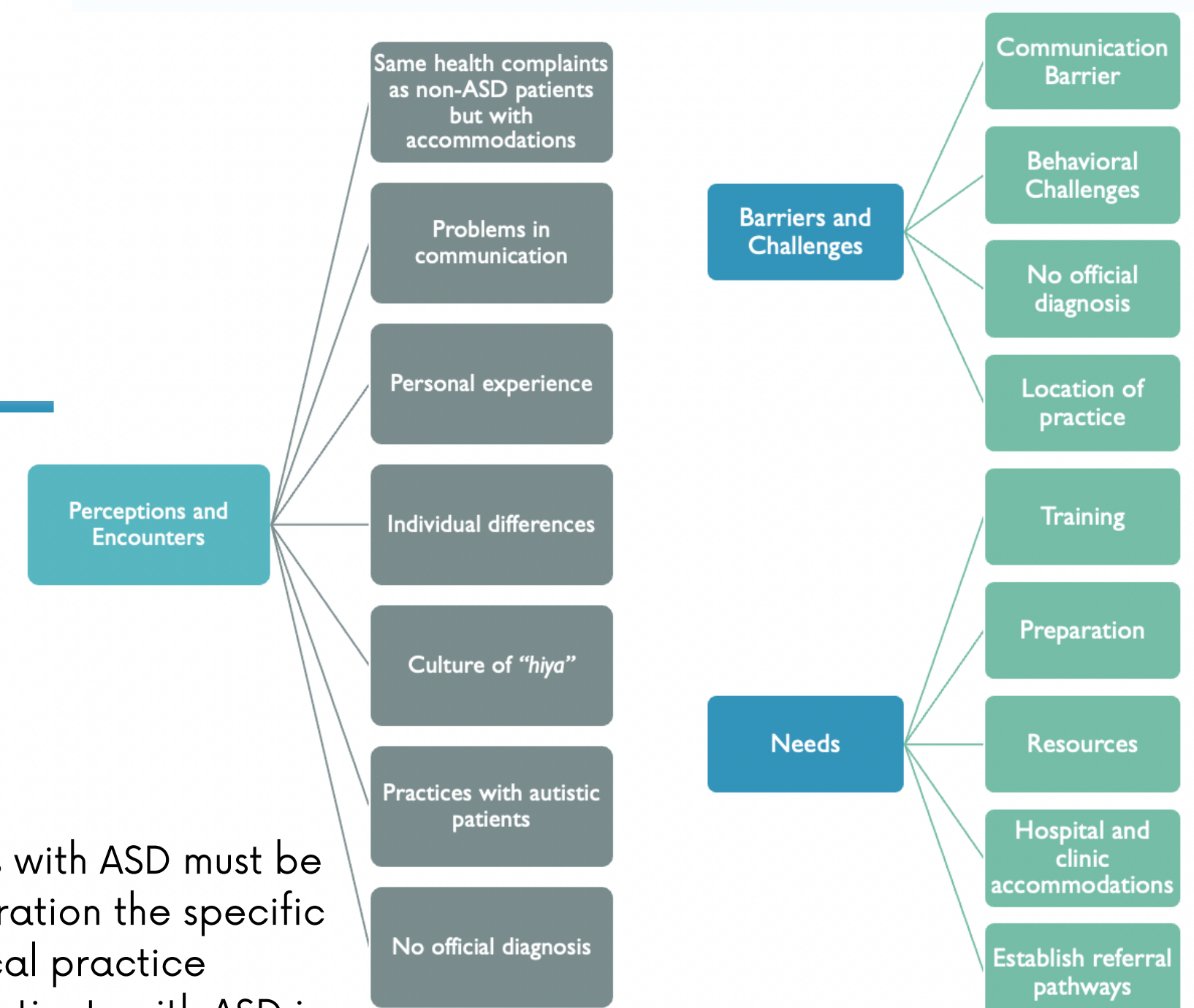


Knowledge of Autism Scale

Item (True or False)	Correct Answers	%
An autism diagnosis cannot be made before a child is 3 years of age	161	51.1
A child failing to respond to their name when called can be an early sign of autism	274	87.0
A lack of eye contact is necessary for a person to receive a diagnosis of autism	172	54.6
Research has shown that measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine is not a direct cause of autism	285	90.5
Autism is caused by a lack of bonding between mother and child	291	92.4
Autism is a rare condition	288	91.4
Autism cannot be diagnosed in adulthood	295	93.7
The behaviors characteristic of autism are usually mild and transient, so specific intervention is not usually required	302	95.9
The prevalence of autism is greater in children than in adults	72	22.9
Younger siblings of children with autism have a higher probability (20%) of being diagnosed with autism	261	82.9
Most people with autism also have intellectual disabilities	105	33.3
Females are less likely to be diagnosed with autism than males	209	66.3
People with autism feel no empathy or affection	250	79.4
Children with autism can be interested in social interaction	236	74.9
More than half of people with autism do not talk	243	77.1
Children with autism can show unusual reactions to certain smells and sounds	308	97.8
Additional mental health conditions (for example, anxiety, depression) are more prevalent in individuals diagnosed with autism than in the general population	284	90.2
Most children with autism eventually outgrow autism	261	82.9
Independent living is not possible for children with autism	283	89.8
The behaviors in autism can only be managed with medication	307	97.5
People with autism always display challenging behaviors	197	62.5
Children with autism learn better when things are presented in a visual form	279	88.6
Mean ± SD	17.03 ± 2.28	77.39 ± 10.36

Knowledge of Autism Scale used with permission from authors. Unigwe, S., Buckley, C., Crane, L., Lorcan, K., Remington, A., Pellicano, E. GP's confidence in assessing for their patients in the autism spectrum. 2017. Br J Gen Pract.

Figure 2. Themes and Subthemes



CONCLUSION



Training with regards to care for patients with ASD must be skills-based and should take into consideration the specific clinical setting. The development of clinical practice guidelines with regards to best care of patients with ASD is recommended.