

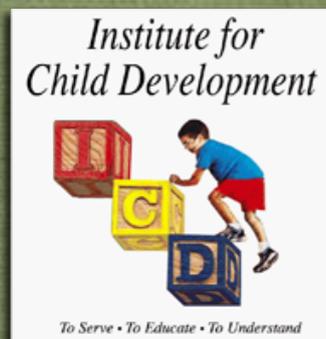


Autism Initiative Training Series

Module 1: Chapter 1.3

Comorbidity

<http://bddso.icd.binghamton.edu>

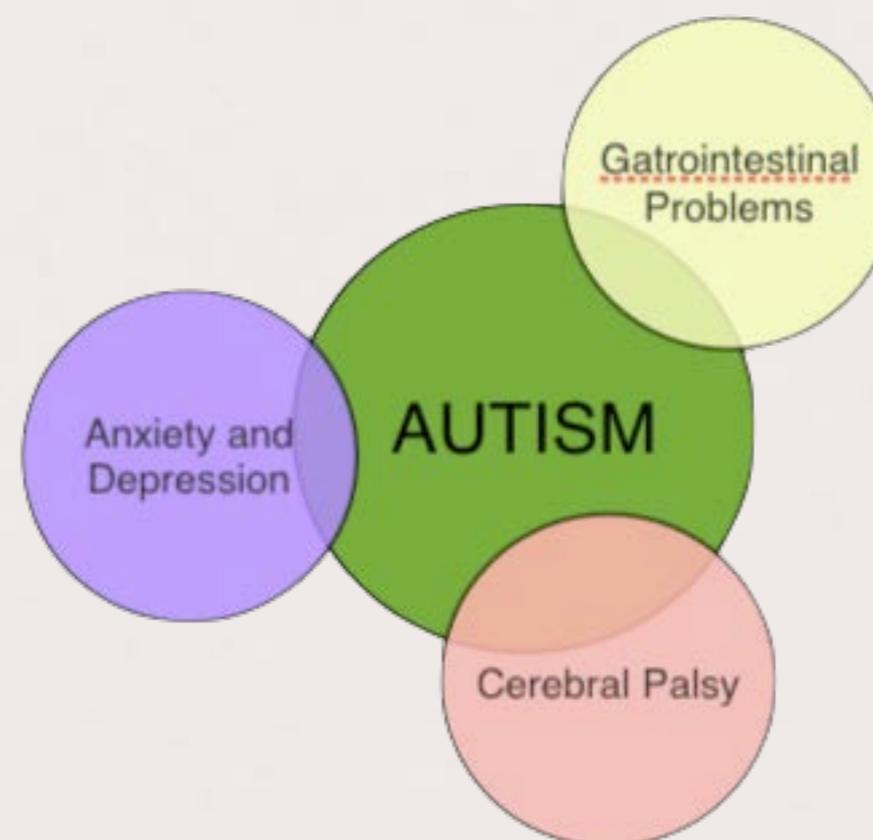


Learning Objectives

- Define comorbidity.
- Identify 2 challenges in the assessment and treatment of comorbid disorders.
- Identify the common comorbid conditions in individuals with autism.
- Identify the major factors related to comorbidity.

Comorbidity

- Comorbidity- when an individual is diagnosed with two or more disorders at the same time
- Medical
- Psychological
- Others



Challenges for Assessment

- Difficulty separating symptoms of autism from other co-occurring disorders.
- Limited assessment measures that are sensitive to psychopathology in individuals with autism (Matson & Nebel-Schwalm, 2007).
- Difficulty detecting symptoms due to effects of already prescribed medication (Newsom & Hovanitz, 2006; Tsakanikos et al., 2006)

Challenges for Treatment

- Inability to communicate or regulate emotions as recommended for treatment of certain disorders.
- Difficulty engaging in certain therapeutic activities.
- Difficulty with social interaction and perspective-taking.

Common Comorbid Conditions

- **Mental Retardation** (Bailey, Phillips, & Rutter, 1996; Matson & Nebel-Schwalm, 2007)
- **Anxiety Disorders** (Bradley, Summers, Wood, & Bryson, 2004)
- **Specific Phobia, OCD, & Social Phobia**
- **Mood Disorders** (Sterling, Dawson, Estes, & Greenson 2008; Ryden & Beierot, 2008)
- **Depression and Bipolar Disorder**
- **Epilepsy and other seizure disorders** (Amiet et al., 2008)

Factors Related to Comorbid Conditions

- Changes in symptoms or behaviors
- Activity levels and withdrawal from social interaction
- Non-compliance and aggression (Matson & Nebel-Schwalm, 2007; Munesue et al., 2008; Tsakanikos et al., 2006).
- Sadness, decreased interest, and changes in eating behaviors (Munesue et al., 2008).
- Pressured speech and higher than normal activity levels (Munesue et al., 2008)