

MEETING REPORT

Autism spectrum disorders & other developmental disorders

From raising awareness to building capacity

World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland
16 -18 September 2013



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Organization**

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Contents

Acknowledgements	05
1. Introduction.....	06
2. State of the evidence on ASDs and other developmental disorders and research priorities	08
3. Advocacy, leadership and governance	10
4. Strategies for comprehensive and integrated services	12
5. Human capacity building	14
6. Tools and strategies for early detection, assessment and follow-up	15
7. Promotion of health in persons with ASDs and other developmental disorders	16
8. Key messages and the way forward.....	18
Annex 1. Agenda	24
Annex 2. List of participants	28
Annex 3. WHO Resolution EB133/4	34

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1. Introduction

Developmental disorders

- Developmental disorders are a group of conditions with onset in infancy or childhood and characterized by impairment or delay in functions related to the central nervous system maturation.
- They may affect a single area of development (e.g. specific developmental disorders of speech and language, of scholastic skills, and/or motor function) or several (e.g. pervasive developmental disorders and intellectual disability).

Autism spectrum disorders

- The umbrella term 'autism spectrum disorders' (ASDs) covers conditions such as autism, childhood disintegrative disorder and Asperger syndrome.
- Core symptoms include a variable mixture of impaired capacity for reciprocal social communication

Epidemiological data estimate the global prevalence of ASDs to be one person in 160, accounting for more than 7.6 million disability-adjusted life years and 0.3% of the global burden of disease. This prevalence estimate represents an average figure, and reported prevalence varies substantially across studies. Some well-controlled studies have, however, reported rates that are substantially higher. The prevalence of ASDs in many low- and middle-income countries is as yet unknown.

Worldwide, people with ASDs and other developmental disorders represent a vulnerable group. They are often subject to stigma and discrimination, including unjust deprivation of health and education services, and opportunities to engage and participate in their communities. Globally, access to services and support for people with developmental disorders is inadequate, and families of those affected often carry substantial emotional, economic and care burdens.

Autism was brought to the attention of Member States and the United Nations General Assembly in January 2008, when the General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/62/139 designating 2 April each year as World Autism Awareness Day. The subsequent observation of that day has substantially increased international awareness about ASDs.

In December 2012, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution entitled *Addressing the socioeconomic needs of individuals, families and societies affected by autism spectrum disorders (ASD), developmental disorders (DD), and associated*

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