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Mothers of Individuals With Autism Spectrum Disorders and Psychiatric Disorders May Experience High Levels of Burden

What is this research about?

Past research has shown mothers of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) often experience high levels of stress and burden. Many individuals with ASD also have other psychiatric problems, however little is known about how these additional problems may impact their mothers. The current study examined differences between mothers of adolescents and adults with ASD and psychiatric disorders and mothers of individuals with ASD without other psychiatric disorders.

What did the researcher do?

The researchers interviewed 142 mothers of adolescents and adults with ASD and psychiatric disorders and 130 mothers whose sons or daughters only had ASD. They asked questions about the children's autism symptoms, behavior problems and physical health. They also asked the mothers questions about their own mental and physical health, and about their relationship with their son or daughter with ASD.

What you need to know:

Mothers of individuals with ASD often experience high levels of stress and burden. Mothers of sons and daughters with ASD and additional psychiatric problems may experience higher levels of burden and need additional supports and interventions.

What did the researcher find?

Individuals with ASD and psychiatric disorders demonstrated more unpredictable behaviors, repetitive behaviors and asocial behavior compared to individuals with ASD only. They also had poorer rated health with more frequent stomach-related and sleep problems. Mothers of sons and daughters with ASD and psychiatric disorders reported higher levels of burden and a poorer quality of the parent-child relationship than mothers of sons and daughters with only ASD.

How can you use this research?

Families of individuals with ASD and psychiatric problems may need additional supports and targeted interventions to improve the health of the individuals with these diagnoses, and the well-being of their mothers.

About the Researchers

Sheilah Kring, Jan S. Greenberg, and Marsha Mailick Seltzer are researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Citation

Kring, S. R., Greenberg, J. S., & Mailick Seltzer, M. (2008). Adolescents and adults with autism with and without co-morbid psychiatric disorders: Differences in maternal well-being. *The Journal of Mental Health Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 1(2), 53-74.

Keywords

Autism, Adolescents, Psychiatric Disorders, Parental Stress, Mothers, Burden

This research summary was written by Ami Tint for the Chair in Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment and Care Research. This research summary, along with other summaries, can be found on our [blog](#) and at asdmentalhealth.ca/research-summaries

About the Chair

The Chair in Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment and Care Research is dedicated to studying ways to improve the mental health and well-being of people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and their families in Canada.

The Chair is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research in partnership with Autism Speaks Canada, the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance, Health Canada, NeuroDevNet and the Sinneave Family Foundation. Additional funds from the Spectrum of Hope Autism Foundation and support from York University.

For more information, visit the Chair in Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment and Care Research website at asdmentalhealth.ca

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