Clinical characterization of patients with autism spectrum disorder in the pediatric neurology outpatient clinic

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder with heterogeneous behavioral, cognitive, medical and psychiatric characteristics. In the private pediatric neurology care setting we consider we must have the characteristic clinical profile.

Objective: to clinically characterize patients with ASD in the outpatient at the neuropediatrics clinic in two areas of the State of Mexico.

Material and methods: retrospective observational and descriptive study of case series documented in medical records from June 01, 2018 to June 01, 2022. Sociodemographic data, personal and family history, risk factors, standardized diagnostic tests and developmental quotient and IQ assessments, as well as their associated medical and psychiatric comorbidities were obtained.

Results: the case series consists of 98 patients, with a predominance in the male gender (88.7%), at a mean age at diagnosis of 4 years, prenatal risk complications in 38.7%, 90.8% were born with term gestational age, 34.6% had a family member with a neurodevelopmental disorder, 25.5% of the patients were between the first and second year with regression in neurodevelopmental milestones; complementary studies such as electroencephalogram, imaging studies and auditory potentials were mostly normal, in relation to comorbidity, 69.3% were associated with a language deficit, 21.5% with medical comorbidity without predominance of any specific comorbidity, and only 14.2% with psychiatric comorbidity. Before diagnosis, 50% of the patients had already received some therapeutic intervention.

Conclusions: in our series, the heterogeneity of the disorder in relation to clinical presentation and diagnostic approach is consistent with that reported in the world literature. Clinical evaluation is the main diagnostic tool and behavioral management is the mainstay of treatment. Awareness of ASD in the medical population and among staff involved in the care of children in early childhood will be very useful to identify patients at risk and to initiate early interventions. Keywords: autism, risk factors for autism, neurodevelopmental disorder

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