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Predictors in outcome of children with autism spectrum disorder

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Introduction: It has been studied that very early intervention may help improve neurodevelopmental disturbances arising from impoverished socio-emotional interactions in the first years of life, however, there is still a lack of knowledge regarding developmental prognostic indicators.

Objectives: With this study we aimed to investigate developmental trajectories of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in order to identify predictive prognosis factors.

Methods: We examined clinical features of 55 children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, in two moments of evaluation, with an interval of three years. They were assessed with the Childhood Autism Rating Scale and with Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule as a symptom of severity measure, at both moments, and with Ruth Griffiths Scale to evaluate developmental profile. We selected two groups, based on the results obtained at moment 2. We also selected questions from a questionnaire to parents in order to understand if early parents' concerns can predict prognosis.

Results: Over time, the number of worse cases decreased significantly. We found a strong correlation between Personal Relation ($r=0.798$, $p<0.001$), Imitation ($r=0.622$, $p<0.001$) and Verbal ($r=0.730$, $p<0.001$) and non-verbal communication ($r=0.699$, $p<0.001$) and the score obtained in the second evaluation. Also interactive gestures, joint attention, reciprocity and pleasure in interaction obtained strong correlations with the final score.

Discussion: Personal relation, imitation and both verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as interactive gestures, joint attention, reciprocity and pleasure in interaction may have a good predictive value in the development of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); Development; Predictors.

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Biography

Alda Mira Coelho is a Child psychiatrist / Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Service in Hospital S. João. /Invited Assistant of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry -Faculty of Medicine, University of Porto in Medicine/Specialization in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry/Master's degree in Developmental Psychology and Early Intervention, in Autistic children, in the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences and Submitted PhD thesis in the area of Autism Spectrum Disorders. Prognostic Factors in Faculty of Medicine, Univ. of Porto. She contributed to develop an integrated intervention project in the area of Autism, with specialized support units for ASD in public schools, with an integrated psychoeducational approach, in addition to training actions and participation in scientific meetings. In 1998 she developed a Specialized Consultation on Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), having carried out numerous training and support actions in this area, enhancing the importance of parents' in ASD..