

ASD diagnostic practices in Australia

Lauren J Taylor

School of Psychology, University of Western Australia, WA; CRC for Living with Autism Spectrum Disorder, QLD

In the absence of an established biological marker for autism spectrum disorder (ASD), 'gold standard' diagnosis is currently a 'best estimate' clinical judgment based on the behavioural presentation of the individual. However, the variability in ASD symptoms and the considerable overlap between behavioural characteristics of ASD and other developmental disorders means that ASD diagnosis is difficult. The task of providing ASD diagnosis in Australia is further complicated by the variability in the level of skill and experience required by diagnosing clinicians. In addition, diagnostic practices for ASD differ between states, with some requiring a comprehensive multidisciplinary team assessment, and others with far less stringent criteria.

In this presentation, I will describe two studies in which we are investigating diagnostic processes for ASD across Australia. The first study is a comprehensive survey of diagnostic practices across Australia. In the second, we are conducting an empirical study to examine diagnostic accuracy among clinicians in Australia. The results of these two studies will contribute to the development of a Graduate Certificate in Autism Diagnosis, Australia's first tertiary qualification for ASD diagnosis. This body of work will assist with the standardisation of diagnostic practices for ASD across the nation.