

The Criteria for Autism Continues to Evolve

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Abstract

The field of autism has undergone significant changes since Dr. Leo Kanner first identified it as a distinct condition in 1943. Our understanding of autism continues to evolve and has been driven by various perspectives from those on the spectrum, family members, researchers, and professionals.

One of the most significant changes has been in the criteria used to diagnose autism. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) criteria for autism, as determined by the American Psychiatric Association, have undergone substantial modifications since 1968.

Screening and diagnostic tools are typically based on the current DSM criteria, but these assessments have limitations that lead to the exclusion of certain groups, such as young children, females, and individuals from lower socio-economic classes, who may be on the autism spectrum but are not identified as such.

In addition, a group of experts has recently suggested a new subtype called "profound autism," which is currently being debated among community members.

There is also much recent interest in classifying the autism spectrum into additional subgroups. Research in this area may reveal more appropriate ways to provide optimal support and guidance to individuals with very similar traits and needs.

To address these issues, the clinical community has begun to take into account the unique needs and experiences of each individual. There is also greater attention being paid to co-occurring medical conditions, as they can have a significant impact on symptom management and behavioral outcomes.

There is still much work to be done to improve the accuracy and effectiveness of autism screening, diagnosis, and support. Overall, the changes in the field of autism reflect a broader shift in the healthcare field towards a more individualized and patient-centered approach to care. As we continue to learn more about autism and its impact on individuals and families, we can expect further changes and improvements in providing effective guidance and support.