To investigate the frequency of anxiety in mothers of children with ASD.

One of the few characteristics of parents that have been explored in comprehensive models of parental anxiety that consider a range of factors that lead to the development of anxiety and depression in parents is needed in order to help families adapt to the challenges of caring for individuals with ASD.

To investigate the frequency of anxiety in mothers of children with ASD.

To investigate the relationship between the characteristics of children with ASD and anxiety in their mothers.

To investigate the influence of mothers’ coping style and intolerance of uncertainty (IU) on their own levels of anxiety.

Children’s autism severity, repetitive behaviours, low levels of adaptive behaviours and communication problems have been identified as the key risk factors for anxiety in their mothers (Hastings et al., 2005).

‘Intolerance of uncertainty’ (IU) has not been considered as a risk factor for the development of anxiety in parents of children with ASD. This is surprising as IU is considered to be a key factor in the development and maintenance of anxiety disorders in the general population (McEvoy & Mahoney, 2011).


○ Measures related to mothers’ characteristics: Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS), The Ways of Coping Checklist-Revised (WCC-R), The Intolerance of Uncertainty (IU) Scale.

RESULTS (Summary)

- 20 mothers (46.5%) had anxiety scores above the threshold for clinically significant anxiety (cut-off = 12);
- none of the children’s variables were associated with anxiety scores in their mothers;
- higher emotion focused coping and intolerance of uncertainty (IU) scores in mothers were highly associated with their own levels of anxiety;
- in the final hierarchical regression model, IU and emotion focused style of coping were significant predictors of anxiety in mothers, with IU accounting for 18.8% and emotion focused coping accounting for an additional 19.9% of variance;

DISCUSSION

- Autism is increasingly being recognized as one of the most common childhood disorders. Moreover, most of the interventions have one or both parents as a co-therapist, increasing their responsibilities even more. A systematic study of factors that lead to the development of anxiety and depression in parents is needed in order to help families adapt to the challenges of caring for individuals with ASD.

- Our results highlight the importance of developing more comprehensive models of parental anxiety that consider a range parents’ own characteristics, in addition to characteristics of children.

References:

Please email for the full list of references

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Contact: UijarevicM@cardiff.ac.uk

1. Wales Autism Research Centre, School of Psychology, Cardiff University; 2. Melbourne School of Psychological Science; 3. Psychology Department, Birkbeck University; 4. School of Psychology, Newcastle University.