



ABSTRACT · Volume 429, Supplement , 117648, October 2021

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Clinical overlap between functional neurological disorders and autism spectrum disorders: A preliminary study

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Background and aims

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Functional Neurological Disorders (FNDs) and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) are two common neuropsychiatric conditions sharing some common features, in terms of deficits in emotion regulation and impairment in sensory sensitivity, proprioception and interoception. Aims of this study were: (i) to assess the prevalence of autistic traits in a sample of adult patients with FNDs; (ii) to assess the prevalence of FNS in a sample of adult patients with ASDs without intellectual disabilities; in this sample, we also aimed to assess the presence of a possible association between sensory sensibility and FNS.

Methods

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Twenty-one patients with FNDs, 30 individuals with ASDs without intellectual disabilities and 45 neurotypical healthy controls (HN) completed: (i) the Autism Quotient (AQ); (ii) the Ritvo Autism Asperger Diagnostic Scale-Revised (RAADS-R); (iii) an ad-hoc questionnaire assessing the presence of specific functional neurological symptoms (FNS). ASDs participants also completed the Sensory Perception Quotient - Short Form (SPQ-SF), assessing sensory sensibility.

Results

In the FNDs sample, no patient scored above the clinical cut-off at the AQ and the 19% scored above the cut-off at the RAADS; this prevalence was similar to the one we found in HN. Conversely, the 86.7% of participants with ASDs reported at least one FNS, a prevalence significantly higher than the one encountered in HN. In the ASDs sample, the SPQ-SF Total Score and the total number of FNS negatively correlated.

Conclusions

FNDs individuals did not present autistic traits more than HN. ASDs individuals presented a higher number of FNS than HN; this rate was associated with a lower sensory sensibility.

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