

AUTISM ENIGMA: THE NEED TO INCLUDE SAVANT AND CRYPTO-SAVANT IN THE CURRENT DEFINITION

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ABSTRACT

Autism is a syndrome with co-morbid subtypes and varying degrees of severity. The American Psychiatric Association published the first official clinical definition for autism in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in 1980. The term Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) is used to refer to autism in the current DSM-IV-TR (APA, 2000). However, the term Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) is more widely known and often used to describe a range of neurodevelopmental conditions with different underlying etiologies and behavioral manifestations. With the coming fifth edition of DSM to be published in 2013, ASD soon will replace PDD as the official diagnostic term. This concept paper attempts to examine the current definition of autism and its limitations and suggests the need to re-define the syndrome more holistically by including two categories of autistic individuals: the savants and the crypto-savants.

Keywords: autism, autistic savant, autistic crypto-savant, empathizing deficits, and systemizing ability