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## **Nursing Care of Patients with Autism**

Hussain Yassin Hussain Alalow<sup>1</sup>, Alhuwayji, Haifa Ahmed <sup>1</sup>, Abdullah Essa Ali Almani<sup>1</sup>, Maryam Nasser Abdualah Albrahim <sup>1</sup>, Althani, Ruqayyah Matuq<sup>1</sup>, Hawra Abdullah Ali Aldrees<sup>1</sup>, Hibah Saleh Farhan Alfarhan<sup>1</sup>, Abdullah Ali Abdullah Alqurayn<sup>1</sup>, Aldrees, Eman Abdullah<sup>1</sup>, Alsalam, Ruqayah Jawad<sup>1</sup>, Alibrahim , Thikra Ibrahim <sup>1</sup>, Ali Hussain A Alshaghab<sup>1</sup>, Aminah Nasser J Alismail<sup>1</sup>, Hussain Ahmed Hashem Alsuwaiq<sup>1</sup>, Hussain Abdullah Alghareeb<sup>1</sup>, Hussain Jawad Ahmed Aljasseem<sup>1</sup>, Hussain Abdrabulridhaa Almajed<sup>1</sup>, Yaqoob Mohammed Abdulwahab Almajid<sup>1</sup>, Mohammed Jassem Ali Al Abdullah<sup>1</sup>, Hussain Thari Alabbad<sup>1</sup>, Dawood Salman Alabbad<sup>1</sup>, Adnan Hashim Alhashim <sup>1</sup>, Yousef Ahmed Aljaber<sup>1</sup>, Abduljawad Khalil Bokhader<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ministry of Health, Saudi Arabia.

## **ABSTRACT**

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) presents unique challenges in healthcare due to its diverse manifestations and the specific needs of affected individuals. Nursing care for patients with autism requires specialized approaches to effectively address communication, behavioral, and sensory issues. This review highlights the key aspects of nursing care for patients with autism, including assessment strategies, communication techniques, and individualized care plans. The aim is to provide a comprehensive guide to improve healthcare outcomes and quality of life for individuals with autism.

**Keywords:** Nursing Care, Autism, Autism spectrum disorder.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by deficits in social communication and the presence of restricted interests and repetitive behaviors(1).

The prevalence of ASD has increased significantly, necessitating a better understanding of the condition and effective care strategies. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates the international prevalence of ASD at 0.76%; however, this only accounts for approximately 16% of the global child population(2) . ASD occurs in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, but its diagnosis is far from uniform across these groups. Caucasian children are consistently identified with ASD more often than black or Hispanic children(3) . While the differences appear to be decreasing, the continued discrepancy may be due to stigma, lack of access to healthcare services, and a patient's primary language being one other than English. Nurses play a crucial role in managing the care of patients with autism, requiring tailored approaches to meet their unique needs. This review discusses the essential components of nursing care for patients with autism, emphasizing assessment, communication, and individualized care.

### **1. Key Aspects of Nursing Care for Patients with Autism**

#### **1.1. Assessment Strategies:**

Effective nursing care begins with a thorough assessment. Nurses should utilize tools specifically designed for autism to understand the patient's baseline functioning and needs. The Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) and the Autism Diagnostic Interview-Revised (ADI-R) are

commonly used diagnostic tools that provide valuable insights into the patient's condition(4) .

#### **1.2. Communication Techniques:**

Communication can be a significant barrier when caring for patients with autism. Nurses should adopt strategies that facilitate effective communication, such as using clear, simple language, visual aids, and non-verbal cues. Understanding and responding to the patient's preferred communication method, whether it be verbal, sign language, or the use of communication devices, is essential(5).

#### **1.3. Behavioral Interventions:**

Behavioral issues are common in individuals with autism, requiring specific interventions to manage them effectively. Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a well-established approach that uses positive reinforcement to improve social, communication, and learning skills (Smith, 2001). Nurses should be trained in ABA techniques to support patients in managing their behaviors.

#### **1.4. Sensory Considerations:**

Patients with autism often have heightened sensory sensitivities. Nurses should be aware of the sensory triggers and preferences of each patient. Creating a sensory-friendly environment, minimizing noise, and allowing for sensory breaks can significantly improve the patient's comfort and cooperation(6).

#### **1.5. Individualized Care Plans:**

Each patient with autism is unique, and care plans should be tailored to their specific needs. Nurses should collaborate with the patient, family, and interdisciplinary team to develop an individualized care plan that addresses medical, behavioral, and developmental needs. Regular review and adjustment of the care plan are crucial to ensure its effectiveness (Volkmar et al., 2014).

### **2. Challenges and Solutions in Nursing Care for Patients with Autism**

#### **2.1. Training and Education:**

A significant challenge in providing care for patients with autism is the lack of specialized training among nurses. Continuing education programs focused on autism care can equip nurses with the necessary skills and knowledge. Simulation-based training and workshops can also enhance practical skills and confidence in managing these patients(7).

## 2.2. Family Involvement:

Family members play a vital role in the care of patients with autism. Nurses should actively involve families in the care process, providing them with support, education, and resources. Establishing strong communication channels between the healthcare team and the family can improve care coordination and outcomes (8).

## 2.3. Coordination of Care:

Patients with autism often require multidisciplinary care involving various specialists. Nurses should facilitate the coordination of care, ensuring that all aspects of the patient's health and development are addressed. This includes liaising with therapists, educators, and other healthcare providers to provide comprehensive care.

## CONCLUSION

Nursing care for patients with autism requires specialized approaches tailored to their unique needs. Effective assessment, communication, behavioral interventions, sensory considerations, and individualized care plans are essential components of quality care. By addressing these key areas and overcoming the associated challenges, nurses can significantly improve the healthcare outcomes and quality of life for individuals with autism.

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