



Letter To Editor

Using of Rehabilitation Services, the Main Concern of Autism Spectrum Disorder: What Can Be Done?

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Dear Editor

Autism spectrum disorder is one of the most common pervasive developmental disorders, which is also known as the most complex and unknown childhood disorder [1, 2]. The first signs and symptoms usually appear early in the developmental period, before the age of 3, and increase over time and adversely affect the child's performance and educational efficiency. Since the first studies in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the global prevalence of ASD has increased 20 to 30 times [3].

According to statistics released by the World Health Organization, one in every 160 children has ASD [4]. Any health care intervention requires appropriate preparations and facilities, such as physical space, human and financial resources, equipment, support of specialists, the cooperation of families and caregivers of ASD children, especially their parents [5]. However, both access to and use of medical care will be challenging for these individuals [6-8]. Evidence indicates that people with ASD have numerous problems in using rehabilitation services. Some challenges have already been raised by the parents

and some rehabilitation service providers and mentioned in previous studies. These problems include lack of regular rehabilitation services, insufficient insurance coverage, non-participation of parents in child care, inadequate information of parents on how to access and use the services needed by children, poor cooperation of parents and professionals in planning services, implementation and evaluation of medical services and inconsistency of services provided in centers, referral problems, lack of coordination between autism centers, insufficient financial support from the government, and finally ignoring the needs of children with ASD in society [8-11].

Because of the complex nature of this disorder, families and the community face many challenges in using rehabilitation services. These challenges are more serious, especially in developing countries such as Iran, where medical services and financial support are neither sufficiently provided nor prepared for these patients [12]. Therefore, the following strategies are suggested for using rehabilitation service for children with ASD:

- Establishing collaborating efforts and constructive dialogue and cooperation between all responsible organizations supporting people with autism, such as the Welfare Organization, the Ministry of Health, Autism Associations, etc., to address the problems of using rehabilitation services for children with autism

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- Participation of and benefiting from people with ASD and their families in solving existing problems in parts of society
- Strengthening and empowering NGOs involved in ASD with governmental support
- Increasing media and social network participation in upholding awareness and improving the attitudes of ASD in officials and society
- Holding training courses for health care providers and therapists in various fields of rehabilitation to become more familiar with autism and the services needed by these people and their families
- Expanding the special healthcare and rehabilitation centers for people with ASD, for easier access and get comprehensive special services
- Changing the vision, attitudes, and approach of policymakers and managers in allocating credits and insurance coverage.

It is expected that by conducting sufficient research, the necessary evidence is provided for policymakers and intervening managers to remove barriers in using rehabilitation services for children with ASD and provide better services to improve their condition and ultimately improve their quality of life.

Compliance with ethical guidelines: There was no ethical considerations to be considered in this research.

Conflict of Interest: None declared.

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