

Chronic Pain Patients with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other Intellectual Disabilities.

In 2015, an estimated 164,000 Australians, 1 in 150, lived with a diagnosed Cognitive Autism Spectrum Disorder. 83% under 25 years of age. Approximately 73% required help or supervision with self-care and approximately 80% required help or supervision with domestic life. Those numbers are quite possibly more today.

Patients with Cognitive Autism Spectrum or Psycho-social disorders, may undoubtedly prove difficult to diagnose in the normal manner. This may be due to certain factors involving their disorder such as difficulties with:

- Understanding what the practitioner is asking.
- Information processing
 - They may have problems assimilating new information quickly.
 - They may have problems adapting to new environments or situations.
- Sensory processing
 - Their perception of pain, i.e. hyper or hypo sensitivity.
- Auditory processing
 - Volume and distraction factors.
 - Inability to process auditory.
- Interoception –
 - Inability to know how their body feels.
- Developmental Motor Coordinator Disorders.
 - Dyspraxia
 - Dysgraphia
 - Neuro-motor differences ranging from clumsiness to complete loss of the ability to move with intention.

It is therefore recommended, to aid in gathering information for diagnosis, that the patient be accompanied by a person who knows them very well.

In many instances, the above disorders have co-morbid factors, thus it is important to have access to current, descriptive, reports from their current practitioners, given the patients' difficulties in conveying what the diagnosis requires.

Things that may be helpful:

- Visual aids
- Ask questions one at a time and encourage questions in return.
- Check that what has been said has been understood.
- Don't provide multiple talking points.
- Don't use jargon, acronyms or complex terminology.
- Have patience.
- Break information down into smaller parts, allowing time to process information.
- Consider the environment – remove background noises.