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### The Autism Group Diagnostic Observation in Children and Adolescents: Three Case Studies

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The diagnostic evaluation of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in children and adolescents is challenging, as there are currently no identified biomarkers that enable its detection. The presence of co-existing psychiatric and neurodevelopmental disorders which are prevalent in this population further complicates the diagnostic process. The older a child is, the clinical picture often becomes more subtle or complex, and difficult to identify as ASD.

This paper proposes a group observation procedure to address ambiguities and discrepancies encountered during the diagnostic process. The procedure consists of six consecutive 50-minute sessions conducted over a period of six weeks, specifically designed for individuals aged 6-18 in a peer group setting. By observing patients within a social context, the clinical teams can gain additional insights and continue exploring the diagnosis. The group procedure allows for a more ecologically valid assessment, considering social context and peer interactions, and helps to uncover alternative explanations for observed behaviors. To illustrate the effectiveness of the group observation procedure, we present three case studies. These cases highlight situations where the group procedure was employed to answer discrepancies between standardized test results and clinical impressions. Through detailed descriptions and analysis of these cases, we demonstrate the value of the group observation procedure as a valuable tool in the diagnostic process for autism spectrum disorders and comorbid neuro developmental and psychiatric disorders.

#### Biography

Hagit Nagar Shimoni has her expertise in Developmental and Educational psychology. She is the managing director of Mirrors Autism Center in Tel Aviv Souraski Medical Center in Israel. In her academic activities she is a senior lecturer and heads the MA program in Developmental Psychology at the Academic College of Law and Business , Israel. She is an expert in autism spectrum evaluation and therapy in children ,adolescents and parents.

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