

Racial Disparities in Psychiatric Diagnoses and Medication Prescriptions Among Children and Adolescents With ASD

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Objectives

- Racial disparities in psychiatric diagnoses and medication prescriptions are well-documented, yet little research has focused specifically on these disparities within patients with ASD diagnoses.
- This study aims to explore the differences in psychiatric diagnoses and medication prescriptions between African American (AA) and White children with ASD

Methods

- We utilized the TriNetX multi-institutional database to conduct a retrospective cohort study.
- Our study included 2 cohorts: children (age 3-18 years) with ASD who are AA and those who are White.
- We examined the prevalence of psychiatric diagnoses and the prescription rates of psychiatric medications

Table: Disparities in Psychiatric Diagnoses and Medication Prescription in ASD

Condition/ Medication	ASD + Black Risk (%)	ASD + White Risk (%)	Odds Ratio (OR)	95% CI for OR	p-value
Antipsychotics	6.9%	9.5%	0.710	0.684 - 0.737	<0.001
Antidepressants	4.9%	12.9%	0.349	0.335 - 0.364	<0.001
Psychostimulants	10.7%	15.1%	0.674	0.654 - 0.695	<0.001
Anxiolytics	8.9%	11.4%	0.761	0.736 - 0.787	<0.001
Nonstimulants	12.4%	16.9%	0.699	0.679 - 0.719	<0.001
Sedatives	12.0%	12.3%	0.970	0.941 - 0.999	0.043
Anxiety	7.9%	18.1%	0.389	0.377 - 0.403	<0.001
Sleep disorders	2.1%	2.5%	0.840	0.786 - 0.897	<0.001
ADHD	21.7%	27.9%	0.714	0.697 - 0.730	<0.001
Conduct	6.5%	7.9%	0.806	0.775 - 0.837	<0.001
Psychosis	0.6%	0.5%	1.131	0.990 - 1.291	0.069
Bipolar	0.5%	0.6%	0.702	0.611 - 0.807	<0.001
Depression	2.6%	5.2%	0.496	0.469 - 0.525	<0.001
Substance use	0.4%	0.5%	0.854	0.735 - 0.993	0.041

Results

- In our study, there were 53,115 AA children with ASD and 178,033 White children with ASD.
- AA children with ASD were less likely to be diagnosed with depression, anxiety, ADHD, conduct disorder, and bipolar disorder compared to White children.
- They were also less likely to be prescribed antidepressants, psychostimulants, nonstimulants, antipsychotics, anxiolytics, and sedatives.
- Conversely, AA children with ASD had a slightly higher risk of being diagnosed with psychosis, although this finding was not statistically significant

Conclusion

- Our findings highlight racial disparities in the diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric conditions among children and adolescents with ASD.
- Further studies are needed to evaluate the causes of these disparities, address undertreatment, and improve access to care for AA children with ASD.