

Reviewer's report

Title: The Importance of Physician Knowledge of Autism Spectrum Disorder: Results of a Parent Survey

Version: 1 **Date:** 16 January 2007

Reviewer: David Mandell

Reviewer's report:

General: This paper is much improved from its previous version but still has some major areas of concern. Primarily, not enough information is provided in the methods section to evaluate the scientific rigor of the study. Secondly, the introduction is still a little unfocused and the length and implications drawn in the discussion section are not warranted given the findings.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached). The authors still provide no information about how families learned about the survey. Was it simply posted on the website and families that happened upon it could complete it? More information is needed about the survey. What symptoms did it ask about? How were possible responses about information provided by the diagnosing clinician categorized? In the results section, the authors say that linear regression was used to predict age of diagnosis but this information belongs in the methods section. The authors also say it was used to predict what information was provided by the diagnosing professional. How was linear regression used to predict what I assume was a categorical variable? The authors report that only diagnosing clinician was associated with age of diagnosis. How were the many colinear demographic variables (most notably education and income) entered into the model? Why were symptoms not entered into the model? The authors should table the results of the regression with point estimates and p values for each coefficient rather than just presenting R2 values.

In the discussion section, the authors state that the fact that age of diagnosis was made later than 3 years of age underscores the importance of pediatric referral, but the authors present no information about whether and when referrals from primary care were made. Age of diagnosis could be delayed because of long waitlists for specialists or parents not following up on referrals, to name two possibilities. The authors make a point of lack of resources in rural areas but they had no significant finding associated with population density and age of diagnosis. This is one of many instances in which the authors use their discussion section as a review of the literature rather than a specific discussion of their findings. While their conclusions are supported by many other studies, they are not supported by the current one.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.