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The role of neurodiversity in older people

The impact of neurodiversity conditions such as ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder), and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) upon the older individual is considerable but not well studied. Chronic degenerative conditions which affect the brain, such as dementia, may share several symptoms with autism and ADHD, including behavioural, social and genetic elements. Both autism and ADHD are portrayed in the medical literature as adverse conditions, as disorders which need medical treatment, and this is a valid consideration to a large extent. However, both have positive aspects which need to be encouraged in older people so that they can reach their full potential, and ensuring that a correct diagnosis is made. Here, we explore the links between these neurodiverse and neurodegenerative conditions, providing insights which may be useful in a clinical setting. While the available research is still not sufficient, it is nevertheless important to be aware of how one condition affects the other, and what are the similarities and differences which can confuse the clinician who may provide the wrong diagnosis and treatment approach.

Keywords: Autism, ADHD, neurodiversity, older people, dementia

Biography

Qualified as a medical doctor (MD) from the University of Rome, Italy, and worked in acute medicine in the USA, Cyprus, and the UK. He subsequently qualified as a Gerontologist with interest in the biology of aging and became a Chartered Member of the academic organisation 'Royal Society of Biology' in the UK. He also has a post-graduate qualification in Geriatric Medicine from the Royal College of Physicians of London, and a Doctor of Science (Medical Research) in 2022. He is the scientific director of the National Gerontology Centre (Cyprus) in association with the Ministry of Health. His recent publications include papers on the complexity of aging, technology and society, clinical geriatrics, as well as books on hormesis.