

Classification of Autism spectrum disorder updated in DSM-5

By ACSH Staff — January 24, 2014



Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) affects about one out of

every fifty school children. However, according to the new Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition (DSM-5) which contains an updated definition of autism spectrum disorders, that number may go down to about one in every 100 school children. At least that's what a [new study](#) ^[1] published in *JAMA* predicts.

Researchers at the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention arrived at this number by looking at about 645 thousand children who were part of the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, of which about 6600 had been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder previously. Using the new criteria, only 81 percent of those children would be diagnosed.

Autism spectrum disorders, according to diagnostic criteria, are classified by twelve behaviors on an autism spectrum disorder list. Such behaviors include: not responding to name by age 1, not pointing at objects they are interested in by 14 months, not playing pretend games, avoiding eye contact, delayed speech and obsession with certain subjects. According to the previous definition, a child manifesting 6 out of those 12 behaviors was diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. According to the DSM-5, however, in order to be diagnosed with autism, a child has to have all three social communication deficits and two out of four of the restricted or repetitive patterns of behavior.

According to study author, Matthew Maenner, an epidemiologist with the CDC, Most of the children who didn't make the cut, they didn't miss by a lot. They only needed one additional criterion to meet the DSM-5 definition. They had four of the five.

Although this may have school systems worried due to the fact that fewer children would be eligible for funding for state and educational services, researchers state that this study is hypothetical. They say, Doctors may change how they observe their patients in order to fit the new diagnoses terms. Also, the children who don't qualify under autism now might be diagnosed with social communication disorder instead.

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