

Autism Spectrum Disorder and Schizophrenia Are Better Differentiated by Positive Symptoms Than Negative Symptoms

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Individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and individuals with schizophrenia (SZ) sometimes present with similar symptoms. This study aimed to identify specific symptoms that most effectively differentiate the two conditions. To do this, we considered both “positive” symptoms (the presence of behavior that is unexpected in neurotypical development) and “negative” symptoms (the absence of behavior that is expected in neurotypical development). Results showed that ASD and SZ both showed similar negative symptoms in social behavior, such as reduced facial expression of emotion, reduced eye contact, and reduced communication. However, positive symptoms were very different between the groups. In adults with ASD, positive symptoms related to repetitive behaviors or speech, while, in adults with SZ, positive symptoms related to the presence of delusions or hallucinations. These findings are helpful to clinicians by providing guidance on the symptoms that are most informative when evaluating ASD and SZ in their patients.