

BDJ Team CPD



CPD questions July 2023

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Article: Embracing neurodiversity-informed dentistry. Part three: Neuro-inclusion for dental patients

Embracing neurodiversity-informed dentistry. Part three: Neuro-inclusion for dental patients

By Jasmine Murphy, Fiona Andrews and Maria Morgan

CPD: ONE HOUR

CPD questions

Key points

- Neurodiversity is a natural variation of the human brain, encompassing a wide range of cognitive and behavioural traits.
- It is not a medical condition or a disability, but a difference in how the brain works.
- Neurodiversity-informed dentistry aims to create a more inclusive and accessible dental environment for all patients, regardless of their neurodiversity.
- Key areas of focus include communication, sensory environment, and social interaction.

Author information

Jasmine Murphy, Fiona Andrews and Maria Morgan are dental professionals with expertise in neurodiversity-informed dentistry.

1. The social model of disability asks:

- How do we fix the individual to allow them to access health services?
- What is 'wrong' with the individual and does not ask what they need?
- What is wrong with the service and how do we fix the barriers to accessibility and inclusion for this individual?
- The health service to provide segregated services appropriate for the disability

2. The Equality Act 2010:

- Only protects those who are diagnosed as being 'disabled'
- Protects those receiving care or education as well as staff from being treated unfairly because of any characteristics that are protected under the legislation
- Promotes and offers suggestions for fairer access to health services, education services and within the workplace, but offers no legal protection
- Is only relevant to those in England and not Scotland or Wales

3. Reasonable adjustments for neuro-inclusion may include:

- Shorter or more frequent visits to gradually acclimatise them to the dental setting, while some may prefer longer appointment slots
- Providing choices on how they make appointments eg online, email or text in addition to the phone, enabling them to pick options that work for them
- Providing breaks (even if they are brief) may help those with differences in attention control
- All of the above

4. Benefits of creating neuro-inclusive dental settings:

- Improved patient experience.
- Dental team develops enhanced communication skills valuable when interacting with all patients, including those without neurodiverse conditions. Positive reputation through demonstrating a commitment to inclusivity. Legal compliance
- Appreciation of neurodiversity which overrides need for informed decision making as well as consent for dental treatment and care
- Adheres to suggestions put forward by the Equality Act and other regulations, complying with a tick-box exercise that demonstrates attempts to be non-discriminatory towards patients and their care
- Helps identify and remove barriers to dental care and creates inequality

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