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RECOGNIZING THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PEDIATRIC BIPOLAR DISORDER (PBPD) AND AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDERS (ASD)

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Recent studies have indicated a significant increase in the number of children diagnosed with psychiatric disorders. This is especially true for pediatric bipolar disorder and autistic spectrum disorders this includes autism, Asperger's and pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified. The purpose of this presentation is to define these two disorders and help elucidate the overlap and the differences between them, as well as help elucidate when a youngster has both.

On the surface these two diagnoses can look quite similar. In both the child can show signs of inappropriate and an excessive of response to frustration, overreaction to sensory stimuli, and rigid behavior with difficulty accepting change and transitions, as well as an intense and obsessional interest in certain topics. Sleep difficulties, limited eating repertoire, problems with inattention, poor social skills etc. are also common to both disorders. The number of children that have both disorders is still unknown but clinically appears more common than previously believed. The importance of recognizing the coexistence of both disorders can have a major effect on the approach to treatment and the individual's resultant level of functioning.

This presentation will address the following question:

1. How are BPD and ASD identified?
2. What are the differences between adult and pediatric bipolar disorder?
3. In what ways do the symptoms of PBPD and ASD overlap?
4. How does one separate the two disorders?
5. When should both diagnoses be given?
6. How does having both affect the approach to treatment?