Guiding the Diagnosis of Autism in Family Practice

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The prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder has continually increased with the exact cause of ASD still unknown. Prognosis is heavily determined by initiating treatment early, making early diagnosis crucial, leading to the development of screening tools starting as young as 16 months. However, there is lack of understanding among family practice providers regarding appropriate use of available resources and lack of knowledge on the signs of ASD in toddlers that trigger providers to screen. Therefore, the goal of this paper is to discuss the red flags, screening tools, and referral guidelines for more timely diagnosis. Supplementing the paper is a clear, concise handout that directs family practice providers towards better identifying the population that needs to be screened, using the correct screening tools based on age, and guiding families towards the appropriate specialists and resources to diagnose children at an earlier age to improve long-term outcomes.