

Summary Comparison of Traits of Autism and Mercury Poisoning

PSYCHIATRIC DISTURBANCES

Social deficits, shyness, social withdrawal

Repetitive, perseverative, stereotypic behaviors; obsessive-compulsive tendencies

Depression; depressive traits, mood swings, flat affect; impaired face recognition

Anxiety; schizoid tendencies; irrational fears

Irritability, aggression, temper tantrums

Lacks eye contact; impaired visual fixation (Mercury)/problems in joint attention (Autism)

Speech and Language Deficits

Loss of speech, delayed language, failure to develop speech

Dysarthria; articulation; articulation problems

Speech comprehension deficits

Verbalizing and word retrieval problems (mercury); echolalia, word use and pragmatic errors (Autism)

SENSORY ABNORMALITIES

Abnormal sensation in mouth and extremities

Sound sensitivity; mild to profound hearing loss

Abnormal touch sensations; touch aversion

Over-sensitivity to light, blurred vision

MOTOR DISORDERS

Flapping, myoclonic jerks, choreiform movements, circling, rocking, toe walking, unusual postures

Deficits in eye-hand coordination; limb apraxia; intention tremors (mercury)/problems with intentional movement or imitation (Autism)

Abnormal gait and posture, clumsiness and in coordination; difficulties sitting, lying, crawling, and walking problem on one side of body.

COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENTS

Borderline intelligence, mental retardation – some cases reversible

Poor concentration, attention response inhibition (mercury)/ shifting attention (Autism)

Uneven performance on IQ subtests; verbal IQ higher than performance IQ

Poor short term, verbal and auditory memory

Poor visual and perceptual motor skills; impairment in simple reaction time (mercury)/ lower performance on timed tests (Autism)

Deficits in understanding abstract ideas & symbolism; degeneration of higher mental powers (mercury)/sequencing, planning and organizing (autism); difficulty carrying out complex commands

UNUSUAL BEHAVIORS

Self-Injurious behavior e.g. head banging

ADHD traits

Agitation, unprovoked crying, grimacing, staring spells

Sleep difficulties

PHYSICAL DISTURBANCES

Hyper-hypotonia; abnormal reflexes; decreased muscle strength, especially upper body; incontinence; problems chewing, swallowing

Rashes, dermatitis, eczema, itching

Diarrhea; abdominal pain/discomfort, constipation, 'colitis'

Anorexia, nausea (mercury), vomiting (autism); poor appetite (mercury)/ restricted diet (Autism)

Lesions of ileum and colon; increased gut permeability