

An investigation of the frequency of social communication problems among adults admitted to acute mental health wards

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| Submission date 03/06/2019 | Recruitment status No longer recruiting | <input type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protocol |
| Registration date 10/06/2019 | Overall study status Completed | <input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input type="checkbox"/> Results |
| Last Edited 01/02/2022 | Condition category Mental and Behavioural Disorders | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data <input type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year |

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Problems with Social Communication (PSC), including Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD's), are lifelong and associated with difficulties in social interaction, communication and restricted, repetitive behaviours. Most research has focused on these issues in childhood. Little is known about how common ASD's and other PSC are among adults, including those admitted to psychiatric hospitals.

Identifying people with ASD's and other PSC will enable them to access services appropriate for their needs that can improve their quality of life. There is a risk that these people are otherwise incorrectly diagnosed with other mental disorders, and offered treatments unlikely to be helpful for them. Nevertheless, some people have both PSC or ASD and other mental and physical health conditions (comorbidities), though the extent of this problem is poorly understood.

This study aims to:

- (1) Estimate how common ASD's are amongst adults who have been admitted to psychiatric hospitals
- (2) Examine the association between other mental and physical health conditions in this population.

Who can participate?

Anyone aged over 18 who is or has been a psychiatric inpatient on an acute mental health ward

What does the study involve?

We will collect data on patient's social communication, quality of life and physical and mental health (Phase 1). A subgroup of patients, selected via stratified random sampling according to Autism Quotient score, will be invited into Phase 2, involving comprehensive autism diagnostic criteria testing.

Patients with intellectual disabilities will bypass Phase 1 tests, progressing directly to Phase 2. All Phase 2 patients will also be given a standardized interview regarding their physical and mental health. Following the Phase 2 interview, checklists for internationally recognised diagnostic criteria for autism will be completed by the assessing member of the research team, to establish whether the patient satisfies such criteria.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Individuals who participate in this study cannot be assured that they will directly benefit from the research themselves. However, the findings of this study will add to the currently limited evidence base in terms of the prevalence of autism among adults admitted to psychiatric hospitals, and the healthcare needs of this group.

In terms of risks, the study does not involve any invasive tests, such as blood testing. However, whilst most people enjoy completing the questionnaires and taking part in the interviews, some people can find certain questions potentially upsetting.

Where is the study run from?

Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, UK

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

March 2019 to June 2021

Who is funding the study?

National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), UK

Who is the main contact?

Dr Samuel J Tromans,
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Contact information

Type(s)

Scientific

Contact name

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Additional identifiers

Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)

Nil known

ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT)

Nil known

Protocol serial number

40960

Study information

Scientific Title

The Prevalence of Social Communication Problems in Adult Psychiatric Inpatients: the SPRINT study

Acronym

The SPRINT Study

Study objectives

The research aims to estimate the prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD's) amongst adults who have been admitted to psychiatric hospitals (including those with intellectual disabilities) and examine the association between other mental and physical health conditions in adults who meet diagnostic criteria for ASDs with those who do not meet such criteria (all of whom have been admitted to a psychiatric hospital) and other psychiatric and physical comorbidities within an adult psychiatric inpatient population.

Ethics approval required

Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)

Approved 22/02/2019, (East of England – Essex Research Ethics Committee, The Old Chapel, Royal Standard Place, Nottingham, NG1 6FS; nrescommittee.eastofengland-essex@nhs.net; 0207 104 8115), ref: 19/EE/0009.

Study design

Observational; Design type: Cross-sectional

Primary study design

Observational

Study type(s)

Diagnostic

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Psychiatric disorder requiring hospitalisation

Interventions

Adult patients (over 18 years of age) who have spent time on an acute mental health ward in a psychiatric hospital in Leicester will be invited to participate in the study.

Phase 1 of the study will involve completion of questionnaire tests, including the Autism Quotient (AQ), the Adult Social Behaviour Questionnaire, (ASBQ, which will be completed by both the patient as well as an informant who knows them well, such as a close relative or long-term partner), EuroQol-5D-5L (EQ-5D-5L, completed by both participant and informant) and the informant version of the Social Responsiveness Scale, 2nd edition Adult (SRS-2). They will complete these questionnaires independently, and either post them back to the research team or make them available for a member of the research team to collect (if they are still in hospital).

Patients with intellectual disabilities will not undertake the Phase 1 questionnaire tests and they will instead progress directly to Phase 2. Further information regarding all patients will be collected from them directly, using a standardised form designed by the research team. The information collected will include the following:

Basic information:

1. Date of birth
2. Sex
3. Postcode
4. Ethnic group
5. Employment status
6. Relationship status

Mental health (psychiatric) history:

7. Date of most recent psychiatric hospital admission
8. Discharge date of most recent psychiatric hospital admission (where applicable)
9. Total number of inpatient psychiatric admissions
10. Mental health diagnoses (ICD-10)

Physical Health (Medical History):

11. Physical health diagnoses (ICD-10)

A sample of patients without intellectual disabilities (selected according to their AQ test score) and all patients with intellectual disabilities, will be invited into Phase 2 of the study, involving further comprehensive autism diagnostic testing, including the diagnostic algorithm and forensic items for the Diagnostic Interview for Social and Communication Disorders (DISCO-A), which will be undertaken with an informant for the patient, as well as the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS-2), the Autism Spectrum Disorder interview within the Schedules for Clinical Assessment in Neuropsychiatry version 3 (ASD-SCAN-3). Patients with intellectual disabilities will not undergo ASDSCAN-3 testing, and will instead be tested with the Stigma Questionnaire for people with Intellectual Disability (SQID).

All patients will also be interviewed on the Physical Health Conditions and Mental Illness Diagnoses and Treatment sections of the 2014 Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey (APMS), in order to provide information about their mental and physical health needs.

Following the Phase 2 interview process, checklists for internationally recognised diagnostic criteria for ASD (the 10th revision of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems Diagnostic Criteria for Research [ICD-10-DCR] and the 5th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders [DSM-5]) will be completed by the assessing member of the research team, to establish whether the patient satisfies such criteria.

Intervention Type

Other

Primary outcome(s)

The primary outcome measure for the study will be the absence or presence of meeting internationally agreed diagnostic criteria (ICD-10-DCR and DSM-5) for ASD. This will be after Phase 2 clinical assessments have been completed (i.e. Diagnostic Interview for Social and Communication Disorders, Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule and the Autism questions for the Schedules for Clinical Assessment in Neuropsychiatry version 3), at which point the assessing member of the research team will establish whether the participant meets the diagnostic criteria through the use of ICD-10-DCR and DSM-5 diagnostic criteria checklists.

Key secondary outcome(s)

Extent of other mental and physical health conditions in adults in who meet diagnostic criteria for autism, compared with those who do not meet such criteria (this information will be obtained from data obtained on the standardized Phase 2 interviews regarding physical and mental comorbidity).

Completion date

30/06/2021

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. 18 to 65 years of age (on the date of psychiatric hospital admission)
2. Being or having been a psychiatric inpatient on an acute mental health ward
3. Understand written and/or verbal English

Participant type(s)

Patient

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Adult

Lower age limit

18 years

Sex

All

Key exclusion criteria

1. Clinical diagnosis of dementia
2. Patients lacking capacity will be excluded if they become distressed by the assessment process (at any point) or if their guardians are not in agreement with them remaining in the study.

Date of first enrolment

06/03/2019

Date of final enrolment

31/12/2020

Locations

Countries of recruitment

United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust
Riverside House
Bridge Park Plaza
Bridge Park Road
Thurmaston
Leicester
United Kingdom
LE4 8PQ

Sponsor information

Organisation
University of Leicester

ROR
<https://ror.org/04h699437>

Funder(s)

Funder type
Government

Funder Name
NIHR Central Commissioning Facility (CCF)

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The current data sharing plans for this study are unknown and will be available at a later date

IPD sharing plan summary

Data sharing statement to be made available at a later date

Study outputs

| Output type | Details | Date created | Date added | Peer reviewed? | Patient-facing? |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------|------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Protocol article | protocol | 23/12/2019 | 05/11/2020 | Yes | No |
| HRA research summary | | | 28/06/2023 | No | No |
| Participant information sheet | Participant information sheet | 11/11/2025 | 11/11/2025 | No | Yes |
| Protocol file | version v1 | 14/02/2019 | 14/06/2019 | No | No |

[Study website](#)

Study website

11/11/2025 11/11/2025 No

Yes