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A CASE REPORT OF ASPERGER SYNDROM WITH ASSOCIATED VISUO-ATTENTIONAL DISORDERS

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In Pervasive Developmental Disorders, visual perception deficits, such as impaired face and object recognition, have been previously described. More particularly, Kracke (1994) as well as Pietz and colleagues (2003) reported prosopagnosia in individuals fulfilling criteria for Asperger Syndrome (AS). Moreover, anatomical or functional anomalies in the temporo-occipital areas have been observed in neuroimaging studies in autistic patients. Besides, this region is known to underlie visuo-attentional functions. Yet, the examination of such cognitive functions in autistic disorders is scarce, even in clinical practice.

This poster presents the case study of a teenager (male, 14 years) diagnosed with AS on the basis of his developmental history and current presentation: marked social abnormalities, lack of ocular contact, good language although with verbal and non-verbal communication difficulties, circumscribed special interests and motor impairments.

A neuropsychological and neuroophthalmological assessment of visuo-attentional cognitive functions revealed a visual field concentric reduction, signs of left unilateral spatial neglect, impaired visual pursuit, visuo-constructive apraxia and visual extinction. The anatomical MRI showed a mild enlargement of the left posterior ventricular horn (facing the occipital lobe), probably consecutive to a cortical atrophy (in the occipito-parietal parenchyma).

This case study emphasizes that visuo-attentional cognitive difficulties such as visual recognition deficit, visual field defect and attentional bias may be associated to behavioural signs of AS. In addition to previous descriptions in the literature, our case study leads us to consider that neuropsychological assessments of visuo-attentional functions in children with autistic symptoms may provide invaluable clinical and theoretical information.