

Approach of health professionals towards patients with Savant syndrome: the wise man syndrome

Abordaje de los profesionales sanitarios ante los pacientes con síndrome de Savant: el síndrome del hombre sábio

Abordagem dos profissionais de saúde frente ao paciente portador de síndrome de Savant: a síndrome do sábio

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Introduction: The term “Savant” which means “wise” is a word of French origin, and therefore comes from the word wise, for which it is well known. Savant Syndrome is called an unusual psychological disorder that causes certain people to have extraordinary intellectual abilities, also known as “islands of genius” and “prodigies”¹. The main studies that evaluated the mental health of individuals in the community have shown that approximately 90% of psychiatric morbidity in these populations consists of a series of nonspecific and somatic complaints of non-psychotic disorders. The main disorders highlighted in these studies have been depression and anxiety². The talents mentioned are always linked to an above-average memory, but with less understanding of what is being characterized; thus, the syndrome is regularly diagnosed in children; however, savantism can also be “acquired” in adulthood after brain trauma, meningitis, epilepsy attacks, or due to a stroke³.

Objective: The aim was to analyze the perception and approach of health professionals towards patients with Savant Syndrome, considering the challenges and strategies for adequate care.

Methodology: This is a descriptive literature review of a qualitative nature. Data collection was performed through searches in the databases of the Virtual Health Library (VHL) and the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), covering the period from 2016 to 2024. To ensure the comprehensiveness and relevance of the results, the controlled descriptors "Health Professionals", "Savant Syndrome", and "Mental Health" were used, combined with the Boolean operators "AND" and "OR", to refine the selection of articles. The selected studies were read in full, and the relevant data were extracted and organized into thematic categories, such as the clinical characteristics of Savant Syndrome, the diagnostic methods used, and the multidisciplinary intervention strategies.

Results and Discussion: Savant Syndrome, also known as Savantism, is a syndrome that is most often associated with autism, as it occurs in 10% of autistic individuals. It can also occur when there are brain malformations or injuries, but this only happens in 2% of cases. The syndrome was first described by Dr. Langdon Down, who conducted a case study of ten people who, at the time, called idiot savants (or idiot savants), because they had in common generally compromised intelligence, but extremely developed specific skills⁴. There are no clear causes for the syndrome, but scientists have observed that there is a strong connection with deficiencies in the left hemisphere of the brain, which would force the right hemisphere to try to compensate for such failures. It is currently known that people with Savant Syndrome generally have an IQ (Intelligence Quotient) between 40 and 70, while it can be found in others with an IQ of up to 114⁵. This theory could shed light on the fact that this syndrome affects four times more men than women, during brain development, the left hemisphere develops slowly, corresponding to the period in which it is most vulnerable, and the male organism has a higher level of testosterone, which can be toxic to the development and evolution of brain tissue⁶.

Conclusion: It is concluded that savants have an innate ability, that is, they do not need to study to master a certain topic. People with Savant Syndrome cannot communicate clearly and may have difficulty expressing themselves. Care for people with Savant



Syndrome is aimed at improving the patient's quality of life to develop communication and social interaction skills,

guided by a specialist pediatric neurologist and/or neurosurgeon, together with the healthcare team.

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