



## SESSION I

### *Autism Diagnostic Process for Adults*

**Dr. Laurent Mottron & Eya-Mist Rødgaard**

June 30, 2022 // 9:00 am EDT

#### **Course Materials**

The purpose of these materials is to help provide an introduction to the INSAR Institute session on the diagnostic process for autistic adults. The materials were designed to prepare students and trainees who are unfamiliar with this research with the general background to receive the most educational benefit from the session. Toward this objective, we have prepared the following: (1) learning objectives for this session, (2) key terms and concepts, (3) a selection of recommended resources. These materials are considered supplemental to the presentation.

In collaboration with Dr. Laurent Mottron and Eya-Mist Rødgaard, these materials were developed by Tobi Abubakare (Doctoral Student at Indiana University Bloomington, USA; [oabubaka@iu.edu](mailto:oabubaka@iu.edu)), Gabrielle Agnew (Doctoral Candidate in Clinical Psychology at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, USA; [gabrielle.agnew@utsouthwestern.edu](mailto:gabrielle.agnew@utsouthwestern.edu)), Dr. Nick Fears (Postdoctoral Research Fellow at University of Michigan and incoming Assistant Professor at Louisiana State University, USA; [nfears@lsu.edu](mailto:nfears@lsu.edu)), and Meredith Pecukonis (Doctoral Candidate at Boston University, USA; [mpecukon@bu.edu](mailto:mpecukon@bu.edu)). Feel free to contact us

with questions/comments. Register for this webinar and other sessions in this series at: <https://www.autism-insar.org/page/Institute2022>.

## Learning Objectives

The INSAR Institute for Autism Research was established in direct response to requests from students and trainees for multidisciplinary training opportunities. The INSAR Institute team is also working to engage stakeholders. The INSAR Institute priorities are to provide a (1) freely available, (2) multidisciplinary training platform for young scientists and others from various backgrounds that (3) allows for international participation. The overarching goal of the INSAR Institute is to expose junior scientists to topics they are not currently engaged in, with the hope that basic scientists and clinical scientists may learn from each other to ultimately advance the understanding of autism.

The current session, “Autism Diagnostic Process for Adults,” is led by Dr. Laurent Mottron and Eya-Mist Rødgaard. *At the conclusion of this session, participants will:*

1. **Understand** the complexity of autism as a diagnostic category.
2. **Learn** about phenotypic overlap, comorbidity, and differential diagnosis for autism and other psychiatric conditions.
3. **Discuss** the limits of our knowledge surrounding the diagnosis of autism in adults, including the unique challenges that arise for verbal autistic women.

## Key Terms

**Differential diagnosis:** Designating a diagnosis, or method of diagnosis, which involves differentiating between two or more conditions which share similar symptoms or signs. *Oxford English Dictionary, third edition.*

**Late diagnosis:** A late diagnosis of autism can be used to define a wide age range, including children diagnosed after the age of 6 years through adulthood (Davidovitch et al., 2015; Huang et al., 2020).

**Comorbidity:** The coexistence of two or more diseases, disorders, or pathological processes in one individual, esp. as a complicating factor affecting the prognosis or treatment of a patient. Also (as a count noun): an instance of this; any such disease, disorder, or pathological process. *Oxford English Dictionary, third edition.*

**Developmental transformation:** In autism, developmental transformation is the change in autistic signs across age. For example, changes in the rate of manual stereotypies has been across age in some autistic individuals (Fecteau et al., 2003).

## Recommended Readings & Resources

- Cumin, J., Pelaez, S., & Mottron, L. (2021). Positive and differential diagnosis of autism in verbal women of typical intelligence: A Delphi study. *Autism*. 2021 Sep 11:13623613211042719. doi: 10.1177/13623613211042719. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 34514874.
- Davidovitch, M., Levit-Binnun, N., Golan, D., & Manning-Courtney, P. (2015). Late diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder after initial negative assessment by a multidisciplinary team. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, 36(4), 227-234.
- Defresne, P., & Mottron, L. (2022). Clinical situations in which the diagnosis of autism is debatable: An analysis and recommendations. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 67(5), 331-335.
- Fecteau, S., Mottron, L., Berthiaume, C., & Burack, J. A. (2003). Developmental changes of autistic symptoms. *Autism*, 7(3), 255-268.
- Huang, Y., Arnold, S. R., Foley, K. R., & Trollor, J. N. (2020). Diagnosis of autism in adulthood: A scoping review. *Autism*, 24(6), 1311-1327.
- Lombardo, M., & Mandelli, V. (2022). Rethinking our concepts and assumptions about autism. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 1184.
- Matsuo, J., Kamio, Y., Takahashi, H., Ota, M., Teraishi, T., Hori, H., ... & Kunugi, H. (2015). Autistic-like traits in adult patients with mood disorders and schizophrenia. *PLoS One*, 10(4), e0122711.
- Mottron, L., & Bzdok, D. (2020). Autism spectrum heterogeneity: Fact or artifact?. *Molecular Psychiatry*, 25(12), 3178-3185.
- Mottron, L., & Bzdok, D. (2022). Diagnosing as autistic people increasingly distant from prototypes lead neither to clinical benefit nor to the advancement of knowledge. *Molecular Psychiatry*, 27(2), 773-775.
- Rødgaard, E. M., Jensen, K., Miskowiak, K. W., & Mottron, L. (2021). Autism comorbidities show elevated female-to-male odds ratios and are associated with the age of first autism diagnosis. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 144(5), 475-486.
- Rødgaard, E. M., Jensen, K., Miskowiak, K. W., & Mottron, L. (2021). Childhood diagnoses in individuals identified as autistics in adulthood. *Molecular Autism*, 12(1), 1-7.
- Rødgaard, E. M., Jensen, K., Vergnes, J. N., Soulières, I., & Mottron, L. (2019). Temporal changes in effect sizes of studies comparing individuals with and without autism: A meta-analysis. *JAMA psychiatry*, 76(11), 1124-1132.