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Defining Treatment Response and Remission of Anxiety in Autistic Children and Adolescents: A Signal Detection Analysis of the Pediatric Anxiety Rating Scale

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Objective: Anxiety is highly prevalent in autistic youth, yet current treatment benchmarks rely largely on outdated thresholds derived from neurotypical populations. This study refines updated, autism-specific cutoffs on the five-item Pediatric Anxiety Rating Scale (PARS5) that correspond to response and remission outcomes on the Clinical Global Impressions (CGI) scale.

Methods: Participants included 106 autistic youth diagnosed with a primary anxiety disorder from 4–15 years of age ($M = 10.23$, $SD = 2.45$, 74.5% male). All participants were from three clinical trials that provided cognitive behavioral therapy. Pre- and post-treatment PARS5 and CGI assessments were completed (CGI-I for improvement and CGI-S for severity). Signal detection analyses utilizing receiver operating characteristic (ROC) procedures were conducted, evaluating PARS5 raw scores and percent reductions that correlated with treatment response (as defined by CGI-I ≤ 2) and remission (as defined by CGI-S ≤ 2).

Biography

Mackenzie B. Smiter is a fourth-year medical student at Baylor College of Medicine (BCM), applying to psychiatry residency this fall. At BCM, she is pursuing the Genetics Pathway and has earned distinctions in High Value Care and Service Learning. She graduated cum laude from the University of California, Los Angeles in 2020 with a Bachelor of Science in Psychobiology. Mackenzie is deeply grateful for the opportunity to contribute to child and adolescent mental health research under the mentorship of Dr. Eric Storch, Ph.D., at BCM. She hopes to continue advancing research in child and adolescent psychiatry throughout residency and her future career.

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