

Guest editorial

Verity Chester

Increasing diversity within autism research

Welcome to the first Gender and Diversity issue of *Advances in Autism*. This annual special issue recognises the commitment of our journal to recognising the diversity of the autistic community within research and practice.

In this issue, we have accepted six articles which focus on a number of aspects of diversity within autism. This includes gender differences and autism in females, autism and ethnicity, and the experiences of those diagnosed in later life.

The first article in the special issue is a literature review examining the “presentation, recognition and diagnosis of autism in women and girls” by Bethany Driver and I. In this paper, the literature reviewed indicates that autistic females present differently to males and a low recognition of the female presentation of autism in a variety of settings, which subsequently affects the likelihood of females being referred for diagnosis, the reliability of diagnostic assessments and access to support.

The next paper, by Sedgewick and colleagues, examined gender differences in mental health prevalence in autism. The authors found that autistic women and non-binary people experienced mental health issues at higher rates than men, which has treatment implications.

Following this are two articles focused on ethnicity and autism. Gemegah and colleagues examined public attitudes to autistic people and whether ethnicity, among other factors, moderates this. The authors reported a number of interesting findings, such as that ethnicity moderated autism knowledge and attitudes in the Asian ethnic group, with autism knowledge contributing to positive attitudes to people with ASD among this group.

Tromans *et al.* completed a narrative literature review investigating autism identification across different ethnic groups, reporting that identification appears to be generally lower in minority ethnic groups relative to the majority population, and autistic individuals from minority groups appear to have more severe forms of the condition.

In a personal case study, Ross Henley describes his journey to autism diagnosis, the experience of diagnosis and the post-diagnosis support provided to him following being diagnosed aged 48 years. The case study illustrates how stress and mental health difficulties can precede autism diagnosis in adults, and how an autism diagnosis in adulthood can still provide positive outcomes. Tromans and Chester provide a commentary on the case study, focusing on implications for practice.

We hope that this special issue contributes to increasing awareness of the autistic experience in groups who have historically received less focus. It is hoped the findings and ideas contained in the present and future Diversity issues will prompt real world improvements to the lives of the autistic community.