**Title**: Development and Implementation of Resources to Improve the Medical Experience for Individuals with Neurodevelopmental Disorders

**Authors**: Abigail Siegel1,2, Jessica Zweifach1,2, Danielle B. Halpern1,2, Catherine Sancimino 1,2, Tess Levy1,2, Joseph D. Buxbaum1,2,3,4,5,6,7, Alexander Kolevzon1,2,3,4,7, Paige M. Siper1,2,3

**Introduction**: Caregivers of children with neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs) experience significant challenges navigating medical environments. Challenges such as sensory sensitivities, behavioral differences, and communication barriers are common concerns for parents of children on the autism spectrum (Krahn et al., 2015). Parents also report difficulties due to limited practitioner experience and knowledge about working with autistic children (Nicolaidis et al., 2014), and a desire for collaboration with medical providers to better support their child (Douglas et al., 2023). The Seaver Autism Center for Research and Treatment at Mount Sinai embarked on an ongoing multi-year endeavor to develop and implement a comprehensive set of resources for patients, caregivers, physicians, and medical staff to improve the medical experience for individuals with a range of NDDs.

**Methods**: First, focus groups were conducted with caregivers, physicians, nurses, members of the child life team, and autistic individuals to identify needs from each perspective. Second, resources were developed to address identified challenges. Third, studies that are detailed below were designed, and institutional review board approval was obtained for relevant resources to collect satisfaction and efficacy ratings.

**Results**: Hospital-based focus groups included specialists from psychiatry, neurology, pediatrics, emergency medicine, gastroenterology, NICU follow up, nephrology, and child life. Main themes included management of behavioral and sensory issues, referral of families, expectations for visits, communication skills, identification of autism, integration of child life, provision of tangible resources for use during visits, and offering resources to parents. Key caregiver themes included communication with caregivers, empathy, and difficulty communicating with physicians privately without their child in the exam room. Both parents and autistic individuals brought up sensory needs, advocating for oneself or one’s child, and participation in the medical process. To address these concerns, the following resources were developed: (1) “Supporting Individuals on the Autism Spectrum and with Related Conditions in Medical Settings” - a learning module now available on Mount Sinai’s Portal for Education and Advancement of Knowledge (PEAK) accessible to all Mount Sinai Health System employees. Three hundred and fifty individuals have completed the course to date. Survey data is collected immediately following the course and three months following the course to measure utility and integration into practice. (2) Sensory toolkits designed to include a visual sand timer, fidget ring, and stress ball along with an information sheet that describes how each tool can be used. The sensory toolkits were sourced from Spectrum Designs, which employs autistic individuals. We have distributed over 750 sensory toolkits across the Mount Sinai Health System (e.g., Emergency Departments, inpatient, and outpatient clinics), to local community centers, cultural institutions, and special needs summer camps. A QR code linked to a survey is included in each toolkit and 74% (N= 39) of respondents have rated the toolkit as useful or very useful when used during a medical experience. (3) A number of visual resources including social stories and a video resource library were developed and added to our Center’s website. (4) An inpatient psychiatry program for patients with NDDs to optimally support those admitted to the unit. The program involves in depth training for all physicians and staff along with a set of materials such as an NDD intake questionnaire, visual supports (e.g., first-then boards, visual schedules, activity/reward boards, coping tools, emotion monitoring tools). A quality improvement project is being conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the inpatient NDD program.

**Discussion:** In an effort to improve the medical experiencefor patients the NDDs and, to ensure all necessary care and procedures are carried out with this population, the Seaver Autism Center developed an informed set of resources for patients, caregivers, physicians and staff. Information from focus groups allowed for the identification of key areas of need and resulted in the development of the following resources:learning module for physicians, nurses and staff; sensory toolkits; visual resources; and an inpatient psychiatry NDD program. Thus far, satisfaction ratings are high. Future efforts will continue the development of novel resourcesalong withempirical evaluation of resources developed.

**References:**

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1 Seaver Autism Center for Research and Treatment, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY 10029, USA.

2 Department of Psychiatry, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY 10029, USA

3 The Mindich Child Health and Development Institute, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY, 10029, USA

4 Department of Pediatrics, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY, 10029, USA

5 Department of Genetics and Genomic Sciences, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY, 10029, USA

6 Department of Neuroscience, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY, 10029, USA

7 Friedman Brain Institute, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY, 10029, USA