

Premature Birth and Autism

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There is a relationship between premature birth and autism (1-4). We had two cases, in which the patients had premature birth and were also supported during their neonatal period. Although the patients did not fully show the symptoms of autism, they showed cognitive immaturity and cognitive defects, close to the structure of autistic mind. Features such as swinging and decline in social integration indicate autistic structure.

EK, 28 years old man, single, computer engineer, has worked in a software company for two years. He was confusing about the reality and dreams. Also he was perceiving others speech as disconnected. He complained about his nonsense and continuous thoughts during the day. He was disturbed by noises and crowds. His speech was disconnected; he was jumping from one topic to another. He was usually doubtful about everything. He was able to write on a computer but was speaking slowly face to face. He had lack of attention since his childhood. He had only two friends and no girlfriends up to his present age. He described his mother as quiet. He was born premature when he was seven months and received neonatal care, stayed in an incubator for two months. He was diagnosed with "adult type mild autism". Clomipramin (37.5 mg/day) and pimozod (1 mg/day) were prescribed, but he started to suffer from hypersomnia. So, he started to take fluoxetine (20 mg/day).

DK was a 37 years old, single woman. She was a university graduate and worked in finance sector. She was rigid in social relations. She was unbalanced and was showing extreme hate or love. She was always doubtful about everything. She was impulsive and reactive. She had the fear of being abused by others. She did not accept any compliments from others and wanted the things in her way. She had no friends and no long term intimate relationship. She left her boyfriend because she thought he was going to leave. However, she regretted what she did and made it up with her boyfriend. She described her mother as introverted, alone and hardworking. She was born premature when she was seven months and received neonatal care, stayed in an incubator for two months. She was diagnosed with "adult type mild autism" and haloperidol (15 mg/day) was prescribed to her. Her doubts and impulsive behaviors were diminished afterwards.

Even though families of both patients had autistic features, this does not show exactly that there is a relationship between premature birth and autism (1,2). However, it does show that autism might cause premature birth. In addition, the aborted babies could also be autistic (3). If these babies were born, the incidence rate of autism might have increased; if so, autism is not only cerebral but also an undefined systematic disorder and it might cause premature birth (4).

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