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Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Dear Editor

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

We thank Drs Poulton and Lampropoulos ¹ for their interest in our paper. ² We agree that multidisciplinary assessment services are helpful for clarification of whether an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is the appropriate diagnosis when there is diagnostic uncertainty. We also agree that a comprehensive assessment can be useful for both confirming a clinical suspicion of ASD and establishing an alternative diagnosis. The service that children were referred to for this study accepts referrals from a range of health, education and child care professionals and carers, with less than half referred by a paediatrician. Our concern is not about the appropriateness of seeking expert assessment of developmental concerns in two or more unrelated areas, which is the role of this service, but rather whether raising the possible diagnosis of an ASD when referring is always in the best interest of the child or the service. Our reason for concern is due to the implications ASD has for the individual child and their family and also for the type of assessment that will be needed.

Regarding the diagnostic profile of the 67 children referred with concern about autism who did not receive that diagnosis, please refer to Table 5. Most children (N=40, 60%) received a diagnosis of a language disorder, and a third (N=23, 34%) were thought to have no associated condition. Of the remaining four children, two children were diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and two with a congenital developmental problem.

Unfortunately we are unable to provide additional information about whether a prior diagnosis of an ASD had been made. On some occasions parents did discuss with the assessment team the positive progress their child had made since the referral, and this may explain some instances of a referral with concerns about an ASD which was not diagnostically confirmed.

Bee Hong Lo, Felicity Klopper, Elizabeth Barnes, Katrina Williams

1. Poulton A, Lampropoulos B. Diagnostic outcomes for children referred for multidisciplinary assessment. *J. Paediatr. Child Health* 2017; **53**: xxx.
2. Lo BH, Klopper F, Barnes EH, Williams K. Agreement between concern about autism spectrum disorder at the time of referral and diagnosis, and

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