3. AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER SCREENING IN PRIMARY CARE

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Introduction. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is characterized by a series of deficits that originate in the first two years of life, including deficits in verbalization, socialization, and stereotypical behavior. ASD screening is the process of assessing the risk of autism through a questionnaire or direct observation.

Aim of study. To identify and evaluate the importance of screening in the initial detection of ASD in primary care settings.

Methods and materials. Articles published in the last 5 years from the electronic databases: PubMed, MDPI, and Scopus were selected and reviewed using the keywords: autism, screening, M-CHAT, primary care.

Results. The literature review showed that screening in the primary healthcare setting of children aged between 16 and 30 months significantly increased the rate of ASD diagnosis, despite the absence of warning signs. The gold standard in ASD screening is M-CHAT. This tool has an increased sensitivity in detecting presumptive cases. Children who are screened and test positive are several times more likely to be diagnosed with ASD compared to those without screening.

Conclusion. ASD screening is an effective first-line triage of suspected cases, allowing for early detection and intervention in ASD with improved quality of life.