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Autism and pregnancy: Is it preventable?

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Autism Spectrum Disorder is an early-onset neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by qualitative impairments in social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication combined with repetitive or restricted patterns of behaviour. The prevalence of autism appears to be increasing; although it is not entirely clear whether this increase is related to the changes in diagnostic criteria and rise in public awareness of the subject matter or whether it is due to a true increase in incidence. Although researchers have already confirmed a significant heritable component to the Etiology of ASD, the exact pathogenesis of it is still unknown. A new focus point undergoing intense studying in recent years has been Environmental exposures and their contribution to an increased ASD risk. There have been long-standing debates over various prenatal, perinatal and postnatal factors and whether they could be associated with a higher risk of ASD in the offspring. These factors range from the presence of maternal diseases/conditions during pregnancy such as Diabetes (Gestational and Pre-gestational), Pre-eclampsia, Autoimmune/Inflammatory disorders and infections to exposures during pregnancy

such as medications, chemicals, and various environmental agents. This literature review paper aims to study the pattern of Autism Spectrum Disorder in association with maternal peri-natal risk to identify modifiable risk factors during the gestational period which could be targeted to reduce the overall incidence of ASD.

Speaker Biography

Mariam Jamil is a 5th year Honor roll medical student at Alfaisal university. Alfaisal is one of the top Universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. She was drawn to Neurology after doing her clinical clerkship in neurology this year and experiencing first-hand the dynamic challenges and complexities that accompany the subject in the clinical setting. She aims to pursue a residency in neurology and work towards cognitive and behavioural Neurology as a speciality. Besides her passion for Neuroscience, her interests include studying and researching healthcare disparities and gaps in the access, quality and affordability of health care. She was also high school valedictorian and it is her dedication to the cause of improving healthcare that led her to pursue a career in medicine.

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