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Perinatal Experiences of People with Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Preliminary Scoping Review

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Perinatal Experiences of People with Autism Spectrum Disorders:

A Preliminary Scoping Review

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Background

What are Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)?

- Developmental disorder
 - Affects social development
 - Affects communication
 - Presents with unique behavioral patterns
- Diagnosis can be made as early as 18 months, usually made around 2 years of age
- Thought to be 4x more common in males than females
 - May be due to atypical presentations that do not fit diagnostic guidelines in females
- Presents as a SPECTRUM of diagnoses with varying severities and abilities depending on where one falls on the spectrum

Why is research into perinatal experiences of people with ASD important?

- ASD persists into adulthood and affects patient experiences beyond pediatric care
- Limited quantitative and qualitative work in this area
- Lack of provider knowledge on caring for patients with ASD, especially those with atypical presentations

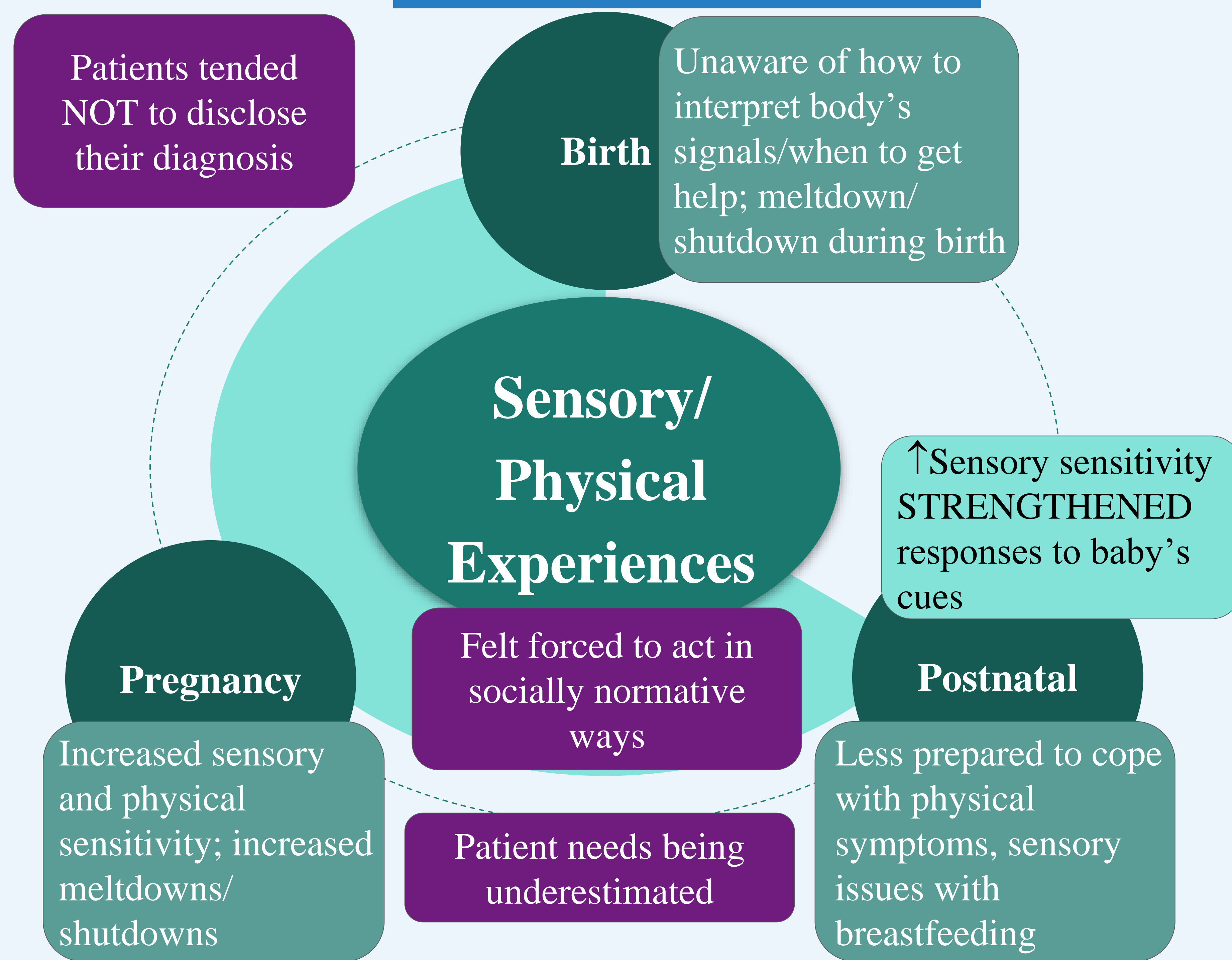
Methods

Search Strings	Results*
“Autism spectrum disorder and gynecologic care”	58
“Birthing experience of patients with ASD”	6
“Perinatal care of patients with ASD”	8
“Obstetric care of patients with autism”	33
“Gynecologic care of patients with autism”	25
“Prenatal care of patients with autism”	51

PubMed was searched using different search strings relevant to the topic. The results are provided in **Table 1**.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria: Articles in English not on birthing people diagnosed with ASD were excluded. After further restriction to one of the following themes - perinatal healthcare experiences of people with ASD, communication barriers in perinatal healthcare for people with disabilities, or healthcare experiences of people with ASD – only 6 articles remained for analyses. Of these, 4 were largely qualitative and 2 were quantitative studies.

Common Themes Discovered



Communication Barriers

- Lack of reinforcement
 - Patients preferred written communication to allow for improved information processing
- Lack of adjustment to patient needs
 - Lack of enforceable policies and guidelines to protect communication as a RIGHT

Gaps in Physician Knowledge

- Disclosure of ASD diagnosis met with disbelief
 - Unable to connect seemingly well-functioning, educated patient with textbook definition of ASD
- Ignorance on how to manage sensory overload/meltdowns/shutdowns

Continuity of Care and Adjustments made by Physicians contribute to better outcomes

Recommendations

- Increased training on ASD outside of diagnostic criteria, such as its effect on
 - neurotypical perceptions of communication
 - perception of stimuli
 - information processing
- Diversity in methods of communication when providing information
- Recognizing and adjusting to individual patient needs

Limitations

- Limited quantitative research
- Qualitative research does not always focus specifically on perinatal care and/or ASD population
- This report is largely based on studies outside of the USA on a mostly heterogeneous population

Future Directions

- Identify any other existing barriers in perinatal healthcare for the ASD population
- Create a survey to gauge knowledge of professionals on ASD and atypical presentations

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my family and friends for their support.

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