

Predictors of Depression in Autism

A Longitudinal Study using Data from the Province of Ontario Neurodevelopmental Disorders (POND) Network

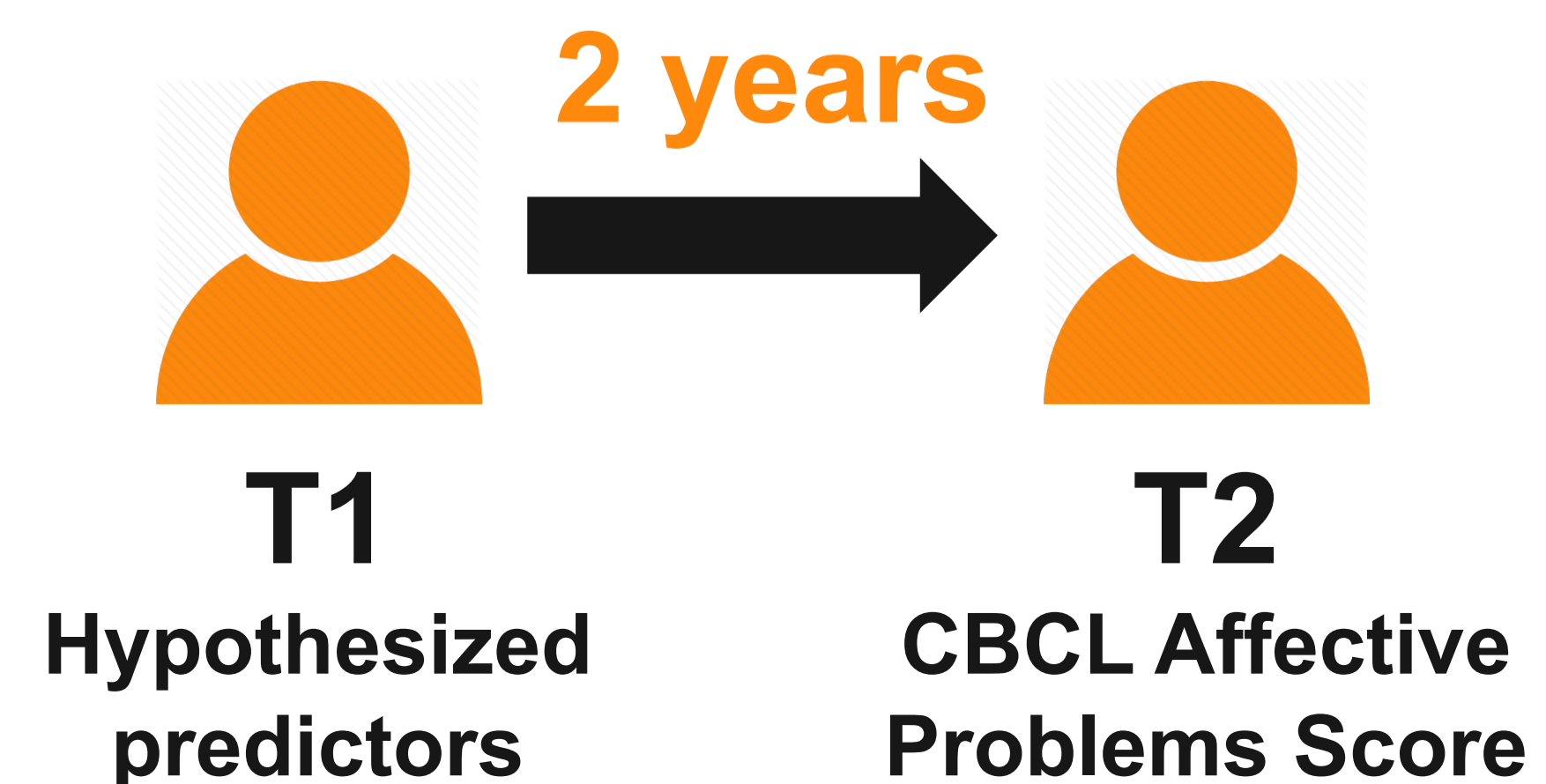
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Background

- Autistic individuals are **4 times** more likely to experience depression
- Autistic youth are **6 times** more likely to attempt suicide
- There is limited research into the validity of depression screening tools for autistic youth
- Clinicians and caregivers may misattribute behaviours to autistic traits rather than mood disorders
- Depression can be missed or overlooked

Study Aim

- Identify patient, family, and environmental factors that predict development of depression in autistic youth



There is NO depression assessment tool validated in autistic youth

Few studies have examined risk factors for depression in autism

Research on treatment for depression in autism is urgently needed

Methods

- Participants: autistic youth (mean age 10) from the POND Network database longitudinal sub-study
- Variables at T1 were assessed for their association with depressive symptoms 2 years later
- Mental health outcomes assessed with CBCL Affective Problems subscale cut point total score of ≥ 6.5 for depressive symptoms
- Analyses: univariate logistic regression model used to assess association between predictors and elevated depressive symptoms, then multivariate logistic regression model

Hypothesized Predictors

Established (>3 papers):

- Age
- IQ
- Autistic traits
- Social supports

Possible (1 or more papers):

- Sex
- Gender
- Bullying
- Timing of diagnosis

Hypothesized:

- Socio-economic status
- Co-morbidities
- Friendship

Conclusions/Next Steps

- Identify factors that place autistic youth at higher risk for developing depression
- Inform prevention programs
- Ultimately, improve screening and management of mood disorders in autistic youth