**Breaking News: Children with Autism become Adults with Autism & then Elderly**

"Autism is a Life long developmental disability..." ²

- To gain from the insight into the life experiences of individuals with Autism across their life course.
- "Wider understanding of Autism can promote an improved living environment & more accepting society for individuals with a diagnosis of Autism."²

- This is a Grounded Theory study using in-depth semi-structured interviews to explore the life experiences of older autistic adults to gather data that provides insights into autism across the lifespan & how autistic individuals adapt.
- Data from first interview were analyzed using thematic analysis, a second interview was conducted to discuss themes identified, to ensure clarity of researcher’s understanding and verify interpretation.

**Objective & Methodology**

- Inclusion Criteria = Age 50+, diagnosis of Autism.
- Recruitment:
  - Interviews to explore the life experiences of older autistic adults and neglects adults and older adults. A search of PubMed for Autism studies that had been published between 1946-2011 by age of participants gave the results shown.

**Study Design / Research Process**

- The Interview process was designed individually with interviewees. Personal adjustments made included;
  - mode of interview that best suited interviewee (face to face, telephone, skype or instant messenger),
  - consideration of sensory issues,
  - structure of interview,
  - individual communication and documentation preferences,
  - preferred terminology,
  - assurance of data ownership (ability to withdraw data post interview).

**Personalised Interview Design**

- A selection of the initial themes emerging from the data are;
  - Acceptance experience and effect of
  - ‘Against all odds... I'm still here’ resilience
  - ‘Burnout’
  - Coping Strategies
  - ‘Facing the Future’
  - Importance of diagnosis
  - ‘Getting wise to myself’
  - Life long masking effect of
  - Positive attributes of Autism
  - Self care—importance of

**Preliminary Results**

- 15 interviewees have been recruited into the study and have been interviewed at least once.
- Initial analysis has taken place. Further analysis, secondary interviews and confirmation of shared understanding is ongoing, estimated completion Jan 2019.
- Insights into methodological approach will be disseminated via publication.
- Data collection has highlighted many positive aspects of Autism not often discussed in the literature.

**References**

⁴ Pellicano, E, Dinsmore, A and Cha, 2011 Breaking News: Children with Autism become Adults with Autism & then Elderly

**Autism Research**

Current research in Autism focuses on children and neglects adults and older adults. A search of PubMed for Autism studies that had been published between 1946-2011 by age of participants gave the results shown.

**Terminology**

The terminology used here is in accordance with the views expressed by adults and their families that the term ‘autistic’ be used. ¹/1 interviewees in this study stated that they have no preference in terminology used.

**Recruitment**

Inclusion Criteria = Age 50+, diagnosis of Autism, able to fully partake in interview process.

Interviewees were recruited via;
- conference pack flyer of the EHV. Autism conference,
- Twitter, FB, via internal University electronic newsletter and snowballing.

**Faculty of Health & Social Care, Edge Hill University. **School of Nursing & Midwifery, The University of Sheffield