



Mental Illness in Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Preliminary results of a study of comorbidity

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What we know so far

- Around 90% of ASD research is about children
- Most adult ASD research is about problem behaviour
- A few studies have identified that adult outcomes are negatively influenced by mental health problems (Howlin 2009)
- Very little research has looked at the mental health of adults with ASD

What we know so far (2)

- Anxiety, Depression and OCD appear to be more common in the ASD population, but research is limited
- There are a number of published case reports of Bipolar Disorder, but no systematic studies
- Schizophrenia in people with ASD is very rarely reported
- Catatonia has been found to occur in about 12% of people in 'clinical' samples

Otago Study

Based in Department of Psychological Medicine, University of Otago.

Aims

- To identify the range of psychiatric disorders experienced by a sample of people with ASD
- Examine similarities/differences in types of disorder experienced by ID vs Non-ID adults with ASD
- To compare range and rate of disorders with ID only and general population studies
- Identify effective treatments & support strategies
- Identify service gaps & future needs

Method

60 individuals



20 with both ID and ASD

20 ASD, no ID

20 ID/No ASD

Method

- Review of service provider & DHB files for individual clinical/diagnostic data
- Completion of psychiatric screening with key support agent for ID and ID/ASD groups
- Questionnaire to clinicians gathering data on ASD/no ID group and treatment issues

Psychiatric Screening Process & Tools

- The REISS Screen for Maladaptive Behaviour (Reiss S, 1988, revised 2009)
- The ASD-A (Autism Spectrum Disorder Battery-Adult Version), (Matson, J, Terlonge, C & Gonzalez M, 2006)



Characteristics

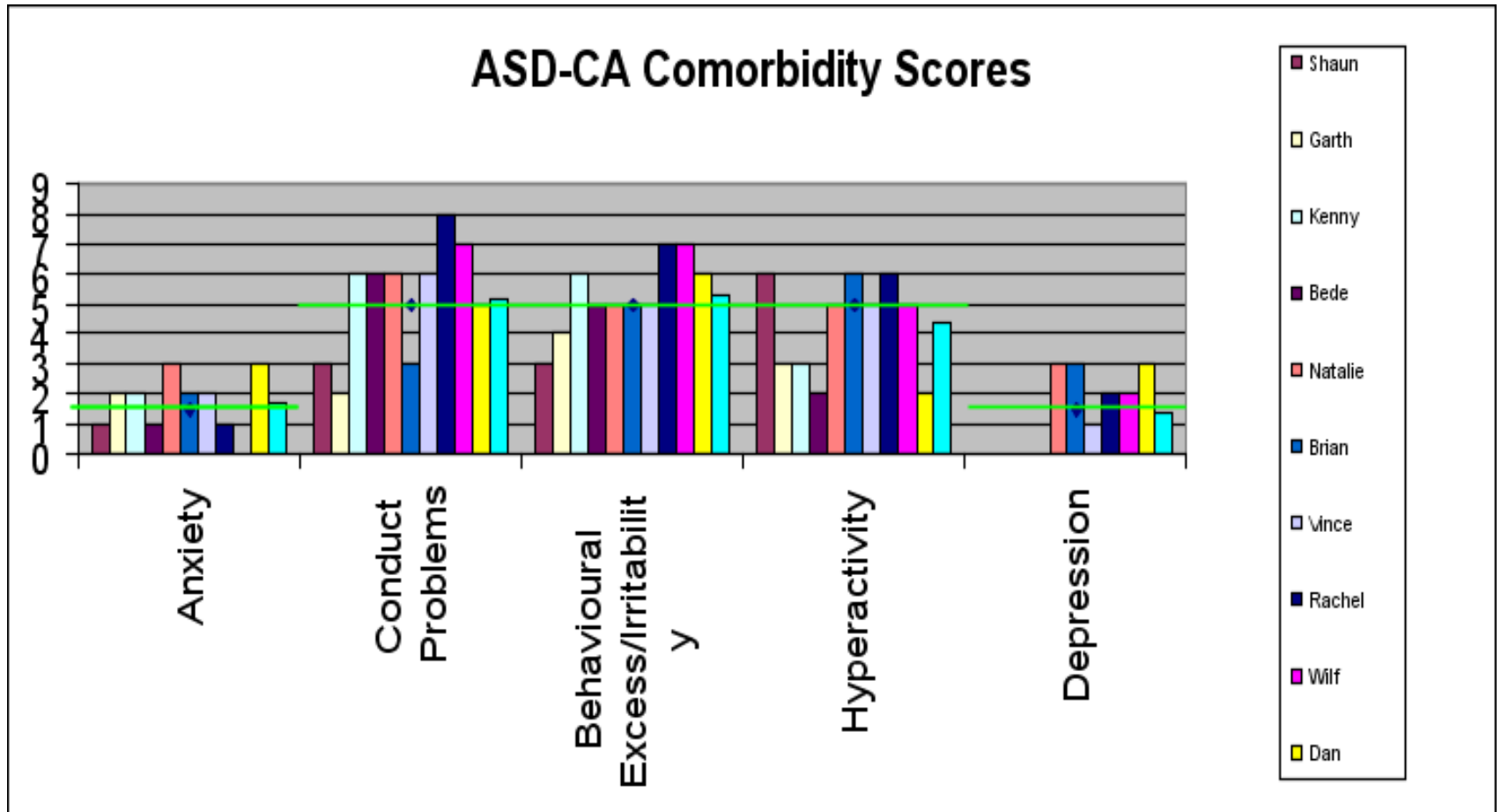
10 adults with ID & ASD

- 80% male
- All have 24 hr support
- 90% take one or more psychoactive medication
- 7 people have severe or profound intellectual disability
- 3 have mild to moderate intellectual disability
- 9 have formal diagnosis of Autistic Disorder
- 1 has no formal diagnosis, but meets DSM IV criteria for Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified

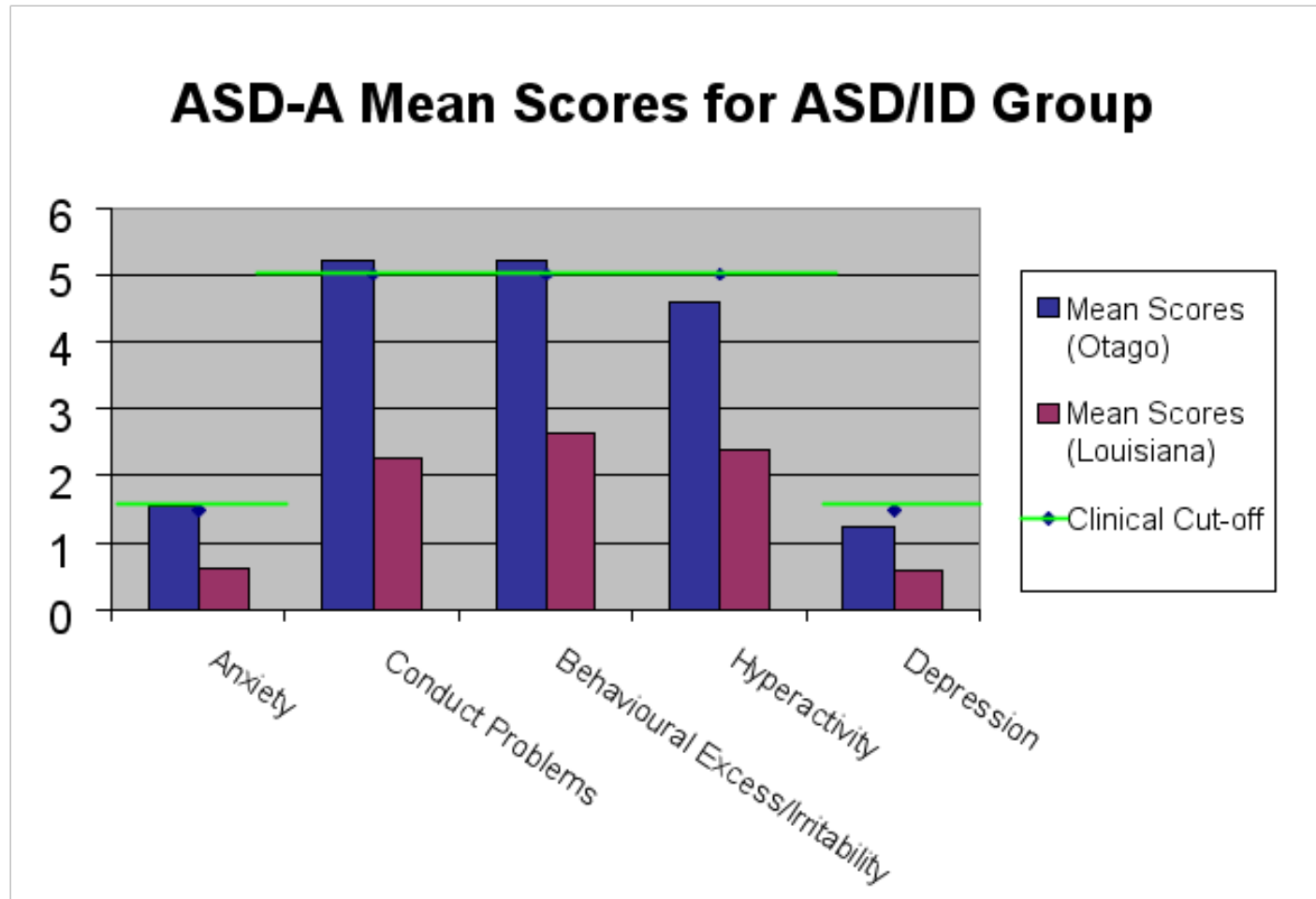
Results

- 70% of the group had clinically significant scores for anxiety
- 60% displayed self injurious behaviour
- 50% had Conduct Problems
- 40% showed symptoms of depression
- 30% had clinically significant impulsivity or hyperactivity

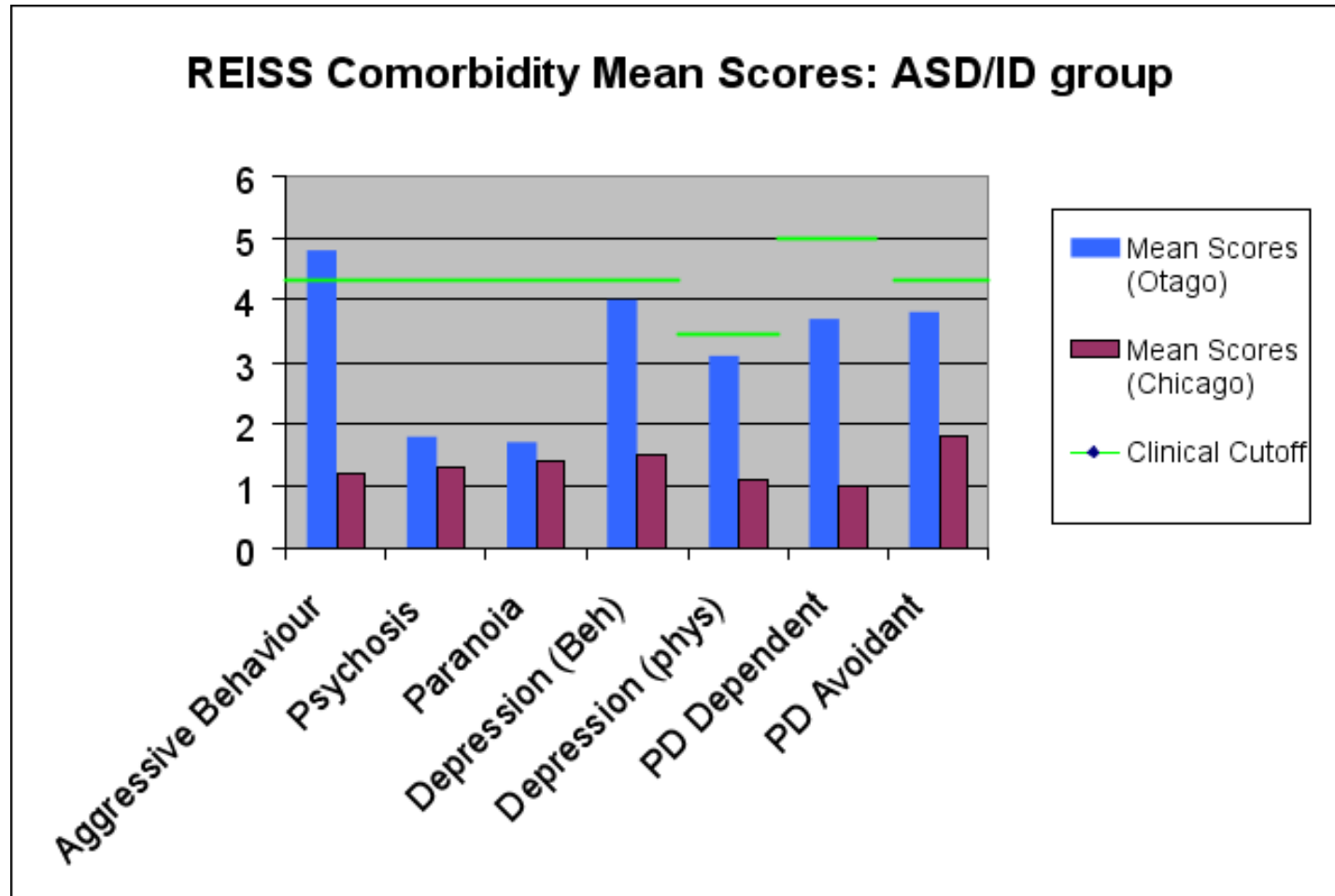
Overall ASD-CA Scores



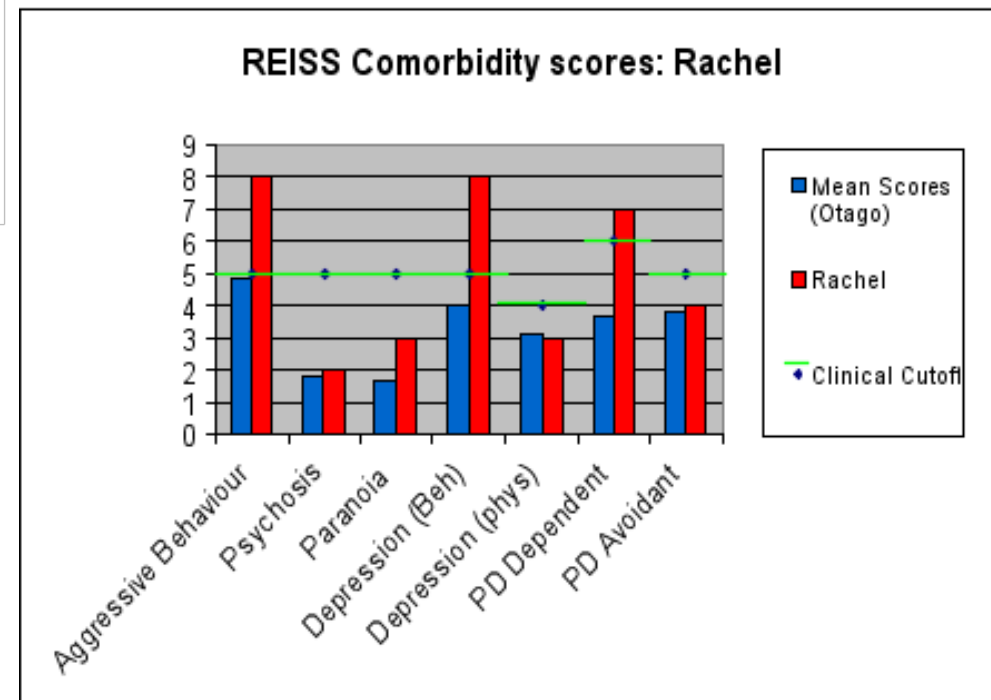
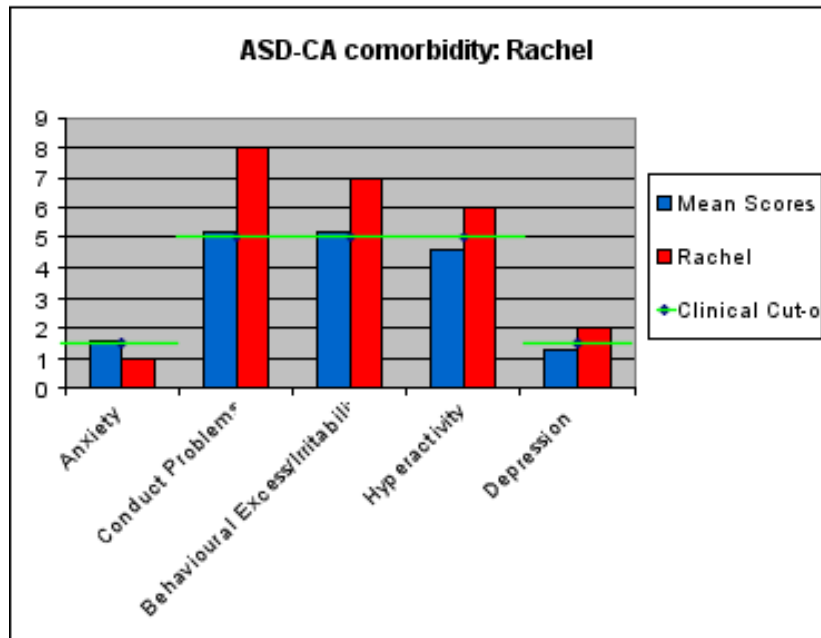
Mean Scores on ASD-A



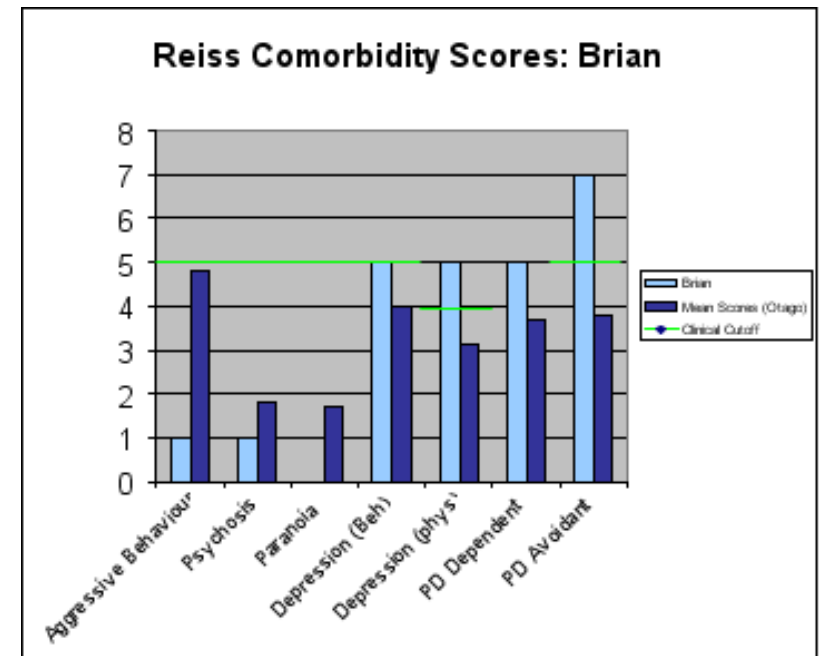
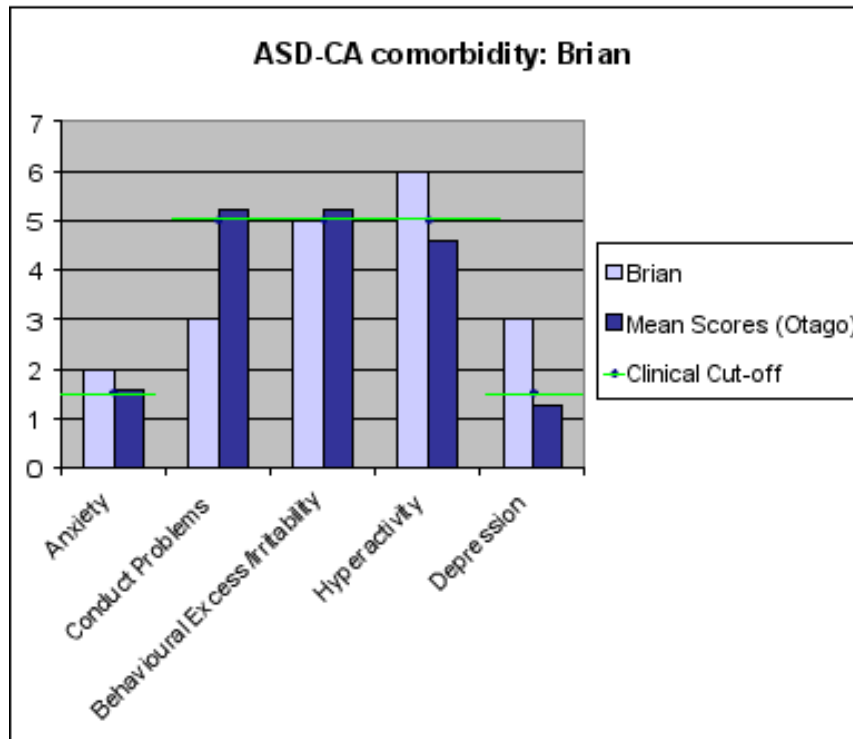
Mean Scores on REISS Screen



Rachel



Brian



Discussion

- 70% had clinically significant scores for one or more additional disorder
- High rates of anxiety and depression found across both screening tools.
- Severe challenging behaviours were also highly prevalent in the group (60%).
- Results indicate that additional psychiatric problems may have a major influence on the behaviour of adults with ASD



Screening Tools:

- Both screening tools are straightforward to use
- Results are useful in identifying the need for targeted psychiatric treatment.
- The ASD-A Screen shows particular promise in the assessment of anxiety, depression and behavioural disorders.