

Race influences parent report of concerns about symptoms of autism spectrum disorder

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Despite progress in the early identification of autism spectrum disorder, Black children still experience delays in receiving an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnosis, which impacts their ability to receive critical early intervention. Racial differences in how parents report concerns about their child's development to healthcare providers may contribute to delayed diagnoses in Black children. We tested the hypotheses that compared to White parents, Black parents of children with ASD would report fewer concerns about ASD symptoms and would be more likely to report concerns about disruptive behaviors, which may sway healthcare providers from considering ASD as a potential diagnosis for the child. Our study included parents of 174 children with ASD who were 18 to 40 months old. After a screening test indicated risk for ASD, but before the child had a diagnostic evaluation, parents answered questions about their concerns related to their child's development. Parent responses were categorized for the presence of concerns related to core ASD symptoms (e.g., social and restricted and repetitive behavior concerns) or non-ASD concerns (e.g., general developmental and disruptive behavior concerns). Black parents reported fewer ASD concerns, especially fewer social and restricted and repetitive behavior concerns, than White parents. Black parents did not report significantly fewer non-ASD concerns. Black and White parents were not different in their reports of disruptive behavior concerns. Lower reporting of ASD concerns by Black parents may impact providers' abilities to identify children in need of further screening or evaluation.