

Collaborative Care for Children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder

Jamie is 3 ½ years old and the second child of Sandra and Justin - both high achieving and hard working professionals. Justin works in the stock exchange and Sandra is a contracts lawyer.

Jamie's older sister, Serena, is 8 years old, and is socially well adjusted and performs well academically.

The family have used the same GP for many years.

For the past 18 months Sandra has been presenting more often than usual to her GP - complaining of sleeplessness, migraine headaches, loss of appetite and requesting medical certificates to account for days off work. Her GP can find no medical cause for the headaches or loss of appetite but does prescribe Temazepam to help her sleep at night.

In her most recent appointment with her GP Sandra presents in a distressed state. With some prodding she concedes she is worried about Jamie's child care. Over a period of about 12 months his child care centre have been sharing their concerns about Jamie and have just recently indicated that there is no longer a place available for Jamie at their centre.

The GP asks Sandra to describe the child care centre's concerns. Sandra states that staff have told her that Jamie does not respond to direct and simple commands, he is a loner and seems to wander around having difficulty settling for long at play activities with other children and that he prefers to play alone with certain toys/activities (such as his favourite trucks in the sand pit) and puzzles which he is very good at - specifically puzzles of trucks, cars, vehicles etc.

Sandra goes on to share that at home she has noticed Jamie has developed preferences for certain clothes (soft fabric, specific T shirts, and track pants/drawstring shorts that are loose), is picky with eating (prefers white foods such as rice bubbles, white bread, specific brands and does not do well with foods that require chewing) and that he rarely eats fruit or vegetables (beyond potatoes and occasionally some creamed corn).

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While Sandra further acknowledges that Jamie's speech is "not as comprehensive as Serena's was at a similar age", that he doesn't sleep well at night she also admits that she and Justin have been, albeit for different reasons, "avoidant" in dealing with these concerns. Justin, who is delighted to have had a son and has high expectations of Jamie as "his boy", continually dismisses the concerns of child care as coming from people who are "unqualified".

Sandra, on the other hand, trusts their judgement but is worried that if Jamie does not return to child care her job security will be put at risk. Her employer has told her that part time employment is not an option.

Her GP arranges a referral to a paediatrician.

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