

## Alterations in Cortisol Profiles among Mothers of Children with ASD Related to Poor Child Sleep Quality



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Caregivers of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) experience poorer sleep, but studies have not yet used objective measures to investigate how child and caregiver sleep affect each other. In this study, 29 mothers and their child with ASD aged between 6 and 16 years were recruited. Questionnaires measuring child autism, maternal depression, and maternal and child sleep quality were administered. Cortisol salivary samples were also obtained from the mothers over the course of a day. Results revealed that maternal depression is significantly correlated with their subjective sleep quality, sleep latency and daytime dysfunction. Child sleep quality was also found to be significantly correlated with ASD severity. In terms of maternal cortisol profiles, a significant number of mothers showed a flattened diurnal cortisol expression, and children of mothers with a flattened cortisol profile had significantly more sleep problems. Overall, results suggest that maternal and child sleep are affected by the child's disability but also are mutually related. Future studies may consider employing measures such as actigraphy or somnography to quantify sleep quality and establish causal pathways between sleep, cortisol expression and caregiver and child outcomes. The present study has clinical implications in examining family sleep when considering treatment for ASD.

### Biography:

BA(Hons), MA, PhD in Developmental Psychology and mental health- UCL -London My interest in examines the cognitive and behavioural characteristics of children with Autism in Saudi Arabia. Additionally I am researching the impact of sleep on the mental health of mothers of autistic children.