

April 11, 2025

Press Release

### **Jamia Millia Islamia Hosts Enlightening Session on Autism and Pediatric Health**

On April 8, 2025, the Department of Hospital Management and Hospice Studies at the Faculty of Management Studies (FMS), Jamia Millia Islamia, marked World Health Day and Autism Month with an insightful awareness session. The event attracted faculty, students, and healthcare professionals and aimed to increase awareness and understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The session was facilitated by Tanishka Sharma and Saeeda Zehra, who are pursuing their MBAS in Healthcare and Hospital Management and Pharmaceutical Management, respectively.

The event commenced with a soulful recitation of the Quran by Ms. Sadia Rais, fostering a reflective atmosphere. Dr. Bhupinder Chaudhary, Head of the Department, graciously welcomed attendees, setting the stage for discussions centred on health equity and inclusion.

Prof. Amirul Hasan Ansari, Dean of FMS, shared a personal childhood memory involving classmates with autism, emphasising the importance of empathy and early intervention. He discussed the societal challenges faced by autistic individuals and advocated for greater inclusivity. He concluded by expressing gratitude to the guest speakers for their valuable presence and contributions to the event.

Dr. Arzoo Bala, a neuro-physiotherapist and the Founder and Director of TICKLES, delivered the keynote address on "Developmental Delays: Identification and Intervention in Autism." She emphasised the importance of Early Childhood Development and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), the necessity of recognising early developmental milestones, and the crucial role of developmental screening in identifying potential indicators of autism. Dr. Bala stressed that early intervention is essential for effectively managing and supporting children with autism, comparing the developmental trajectories of neurotypical and autistic children. To illustrate her points, she provided a case study detailing the symptoms observed in a patient, the specific therapies implemented, and the improvements noted following early intervention.

Dr. Himandri Kapil, a neuro-physiotherapist, outlined common pediatric neuro-developmental disorders, particularly ADHD. She emphasised early detection and multidisciplinary approaches that involve neurologists, psychologists, and educators, clarifying myths and realities about ADHD. She highlighted the importance of pediatric

neuro-physiotherapy in promoting comprehensive child development. Additionally, she elaborated on the assessment tools and observational methods used by neuro-physiotherapists to differentiate ADHD from other similar disorders.

Ms. Bhavya Agnihotri, a counselling psychologist and ABA therapist, distinguished autism from ADHD by explaining their distinct behavioural markers and therapeutic strategies. She emphasised family-oriented interventions, such as visual scheduling and positive reinforcement techniques, while advocating for emotional empowerment for caregivers.

The session concluded with a call for increased societal awareness to reduce stigma and promote inclusion for neurodiverse children. Audience members engaged actively, sharing personal experiences and asking questions, which made the session interactive, relatable, and impactful. A compelling student skit performed by MBA Healthcare and Hospital Management students vividly illustrated the real-life challenges and strengths of autistic individuals, fostering empathy and understanding among attendees. The skit featured students from MBA HHM, including Zainab Wahid, Dimpy, Osama Yasir, Hera, Areeba, Junaid, Anushka Sahni, and Sakshi Singh.

The event, organised by Dr. Pooja Sharma and coordinated by Dr. Ishrat Rasool, Assistant Professor at DHMHS, and Dr. Sheenam Ayub, Assistant Professor at DHMHS, successfully promoted awareness, reduced stigma, and encouraged community support for neurodiverse individuals. The World Health Day & Autism Awareness Session effectively fostered understanding, empathy, and advocacy for individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders. Through expert talks, interactive discussions, and student participation, the event highlighted the importance of early intervention, inclusive practices, and community support in promoting health equity and neurodiversity. It concluded with heartfelt thanks and the National Anthem, leaving a profound impact on all participants.

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