

# Review of: "[Commentary] Recognising Physical and Mental Health Issues in Neurodivergent Females: Opinion Piece"

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**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

This commentary tackles a timely topic and has good potential of informing readers; however, I find it could be improved in style, content and clarity.

In terms of aims, the authors should clarify what the paper sets out to do practically to help the progress they state as necessary: reviewing findings, summarise contemporary opinions or debates and generate research questions that others can then take into their research? Given the many commentaries and opinion papers on the topic, I think it might not be enough to simply state what is important.

Similarly, authors could improve the specificity of the tone: they refer to important issues, but it is also vital to specify whose focus should shift and suggest how. For example, the authors mention a wide variety of subjects (clinicians, medical doctors, health workers) that all follow starkly different protocols and work in different conditions, therefore the authors should be specific.

A few more specific points below:

**Abstract:**

- Given the focus on females for the rest of the paper, the abstract should focus on the female population and reflect the structure of the paper.

**Paragraph "Explaining neurodiversity and neurodivergence":**

- "*Therefore, the focus should be on problems that neurodiverse people have rather than the problems that they are*". I did not get the meaning of this sentence at first; I checked the reference and I found out that this is a partial direct citation of Stenning & Rosqvist, 2021 (from the paper: *This perspective focuses, to paraphrase Jim Sinclair's language, on 'problems that neurodivergent people have' rather than the 'problem we are'*). Highlighting the citation in quotes or italics is more appropriate and could help the reader understand what the authors mean.

**Paragraph "Increasing recognition of the high prevalence of neurodiversity in females":**

- I am not sure that "neurodiversity is perceived more common among males"? Certainly, the female under-/mis-diagnosis largely stems from the DSM-V diagnostic criteria so it is more correct to relate the male female ratio to the diagnostic entities rather than neurodiversity. In fact, the provided citation refers to the diagnostic entities, not to

perception of neurodiversity.

- In addition to the previous point, more citations are needed as Young et al. 2020 only refers to ADHD but neurodiversity includes many more conditions.
- The authors should clarify to what specific misdiagnosis the list of symptoms provided can lead to, and what specific true conditions they may be signs of.

Paragraph “The healthcare needs of neurodiverse females”:

- The authors should explain what the specific healthcare needs are based on the problems that they exemplify. For example, they state that autistic females have more adverse childhood experience that affect health, but that is a tad too general: what are the needs of a person at risk of child abuse in terms of healthcare? Another example is mortality: given higher mortality, what is it that health care providers should implement to tackle this? Given the little research in autism, the authors could read literature from other fields (it may be true that neurodivergent people may communicate their pain differently, but their arthritis is going to need the same treatment).

Paragraph “Physical health issues in neurodiverse females”:

- This part could be more informative if the authors provided numbers/percentages, sample sizes and some essential characteristics of the populations (age, ethnicity) of the studies they cite, to get a sense of the replicability and generalisability of reported differences.

Paragraph “Mental health issues in neurodivergent females”:

- There is a lot of literature evidencing that mental health issues in neurodivergent people stems from environmental conditions; the authors can say that there is evidence claiming it has to do with brain structure, but they should provide evidence of both sides and clarify that genetics and environment interact.

Paragraphs “Challenges for the clinician/Future Priorities”:

- Many reviews explore in depth all the topics explored in the previous sections, so I find these last two paragraphs are the most informative and novel, and could go up first just after the abstract, to give an immediate sense of relevance.
- However, these two paragraphs need revision in style and references must be provided (they have none currently).