

Letter to the editor: Misquoting the ASD prevalence rate for Hong Kong: Comment on Tse (2020)

Tse (2020) noted in the introduction of his paper, “The most recent ASD prevalence rate reported for Hong Kong is 1 in 68 children and the rate is expected to increase (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, HKSAR 2012).” The corresponding citation was “Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, HKSAR (2012). Identified prevalence of autism spectrum disorder. Retrieved May 28, 2019, from <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>.”

The cited webpage “www.cdc.gov” is indeed directed to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States of America. As there is no Centre for Disease Control and Prevention in Hong Kong, quoting information from the webpage and presenting them as data from Hong Kong is something factually inaccurate.

According to the information retrieved from the cited link on October 28, 2020 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020), the reported prevalence data was collected from the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, which consisted of 11 Sites in the United States. Hence, the ASD prevalence reported in the cited link was for the US instead of Hong Kong.

To my best knowledge, there is no official ASD prevalence rate in Hong Kong. One frequently cited figure for Hong Kong was from the epidemiological study by Wong and Hui (2008) (e.g. Sun et al., 2013; Tait et al., 2016). Using the population statistics from Hong Kong government between 1986 and 2005, they reported “the prevalence was 16.1 per 10,000 children less than 15 years old”, that is, 1 in 621 children, are diagnosed with ASD.

The current prevalence rate would likely be higher than 1 in 621 children, as according to the Education Bureau in Hong Kong, the number of students diagnosed with ASD has increased rapidly (The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 2019). However, as far as I know, we do not have a more updated and reliable prevalence rate in Hong Kong yet.

While the above misquote did not affect the research and conclusion of the paper, I would like to clarify that as without an official prevalence rate in Hong Kong, such misquote may lead to further misreporting by the research community.

Reference

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