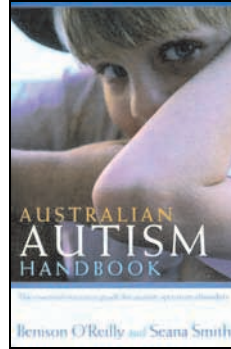


Autism's essential reading

Australian autism handbook. The essential resource guide for autism spectrum disorders. Benison O'Reilly, Seana Smith. Sydney: Jane Curry Publishing, 2008 (xv + 399 pp, \$35.00). ISBN 978 0 9804758 1 4.

AUTISM IS NOT as rare as we once thought. Recent Australian research indicates autism occurs in one child in 160, and half a million Australians are living in a family that has a child or adult with autism. The annual cost of autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) to the community is estimated at between \$4.5 and \$7 billion. It is an expensive disability for both the government and for families. For example, the cost of intensive applied behavioural analysis for a family is around \$40000 per annum, with a program in the preschool years lasting 2 to 4 years.

While most of the literature on autism, especially for parents, is published in the United States or the United Kingdom and refers to American or British services, we now at last have an Australian guidebook for families. The authors are parents of children with ASD, and the book is primarily written for families of a newly diagnosed



child. However, the *Australian autism handbook* will be invaluable for clinicians as a resource when talking to families and providing advice on services and resources.

The text often refers to Australian research, and we need to recognise the degree and depth of Australian expertise and research on ASD. This book provides current information on services in each state or territory, the latest Medicare initiatives, and research areas of Australian specialists and academics. Clinicians will be interested in the perspectives and experiences of families (such as the susceptibility of parents of a child with autism to develop signs of depression), and to learn more about the latest treatments that parents have heard about and may request for their son or daughter with autism.

Tony Attwood

Clinical Psychologist
Minds and Hearts
Asperger Syndrome and Autism Clinic
Brisbane, QLD