How are diagnostic tools used in clinical practice?
Evidence from a nationwide survey of children’s diagnostic services in Wales, UK

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1. Background
• Good practice guidelines for the assessment and ASD diagnosis of children recommend a developmental history interview and a focused observation as two essential components of the assessment process.
• Standardized assessment tools such as the ADI-R, DISCO, 3di, and ADOS have been developed to guide the process of interview and observation.
• The use of these diagnostic tools is now routine for research studies.
• The extent to which these tools are used in clinical practice is not known.

2. Objectives
• To obtain information on methods used in the diagnosis process.
• In particular, to clarify the extent to which standardized diagnostic tools contribute to the diagnostic process for clinicians diagnosing children with ASD in Wales, UK.

3. Method
• Questionnaire content and design were guided by an initial qualitative focus group study with clinicians.
• Questionnaire respondents were 118 psychiatrists, pediatricians, clinical psychologists and other clinicians involved in diagnosing children with ASD throughout Wales (response rate of 57%).
• The questionnaire asked about elements of assessment used in the diagnostic process and the use and value of specific diagnostic tools.

4. Results

5. Summary and Discussion
• Clinicians in Wales, UK, use developmental history interview and observation methods in virtually all cases of diagnosis of children.
• However clinicians do not necessarily use standardized assessment and diagnostic tools to guide their clinical judgment when making a diagnosis of ASD.
• If this picture is common in other nations, this has broader implications for research recruitment, international comparisons and the development of a consistent conceptual understanding of ASD.