

Introduction

- Autism is a **developmental disorder** characterized by *deficits in social communication* and *repetitive and restrictive behaviors*^{1,2}.
- Manifestations *range* from normal intellectual and language abilities with challenges regarding only social communication to severely limited intellectual and language abilities^{1,3}.
- The care of patients with autism requires an understanding of their unique features, as shown in **Figure 1**⁴.

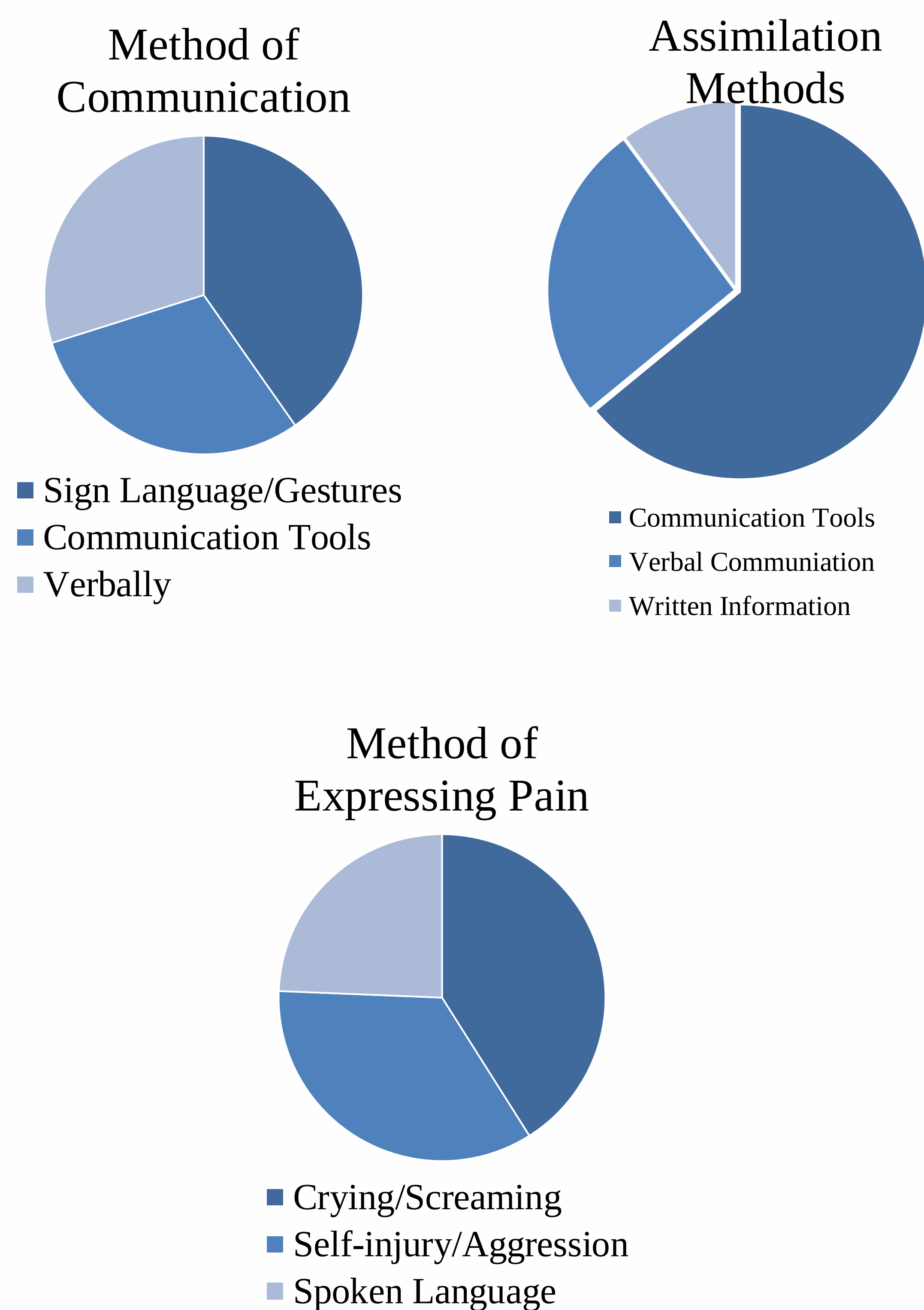


Figure 1: Parental survey results showing how children with autism communicate, learn new information and express pain⁴.

Case Report

A **20-year-old, 120kg female** with *autism, epilepsy* and *obesity* presented for scheduled *wisdom teeth extraction*. Her past procedural history included MRI, EUA/IUD placement, and previous dental procedures.

After admission, she *refused* to wear a hospital gown. Preoperative IV placement was impossible due to *lack of patient cooperation*. Mask induction in the operating room followed by IV placement was planned and the patient was transferred to the operating room accompanied by her mother.

When the mask was introduced, she became agitated and *refused the mask*. The team called for additional assistance to help restrain her, but all efforts were fruitless.

The mother asked for a reduction in the number of personnel and after *reassurance and gentle coaxing*, the patient agreed to an awake IV placement. She subsequently underwent an uneventful IV induction and tolerated the procedure well.

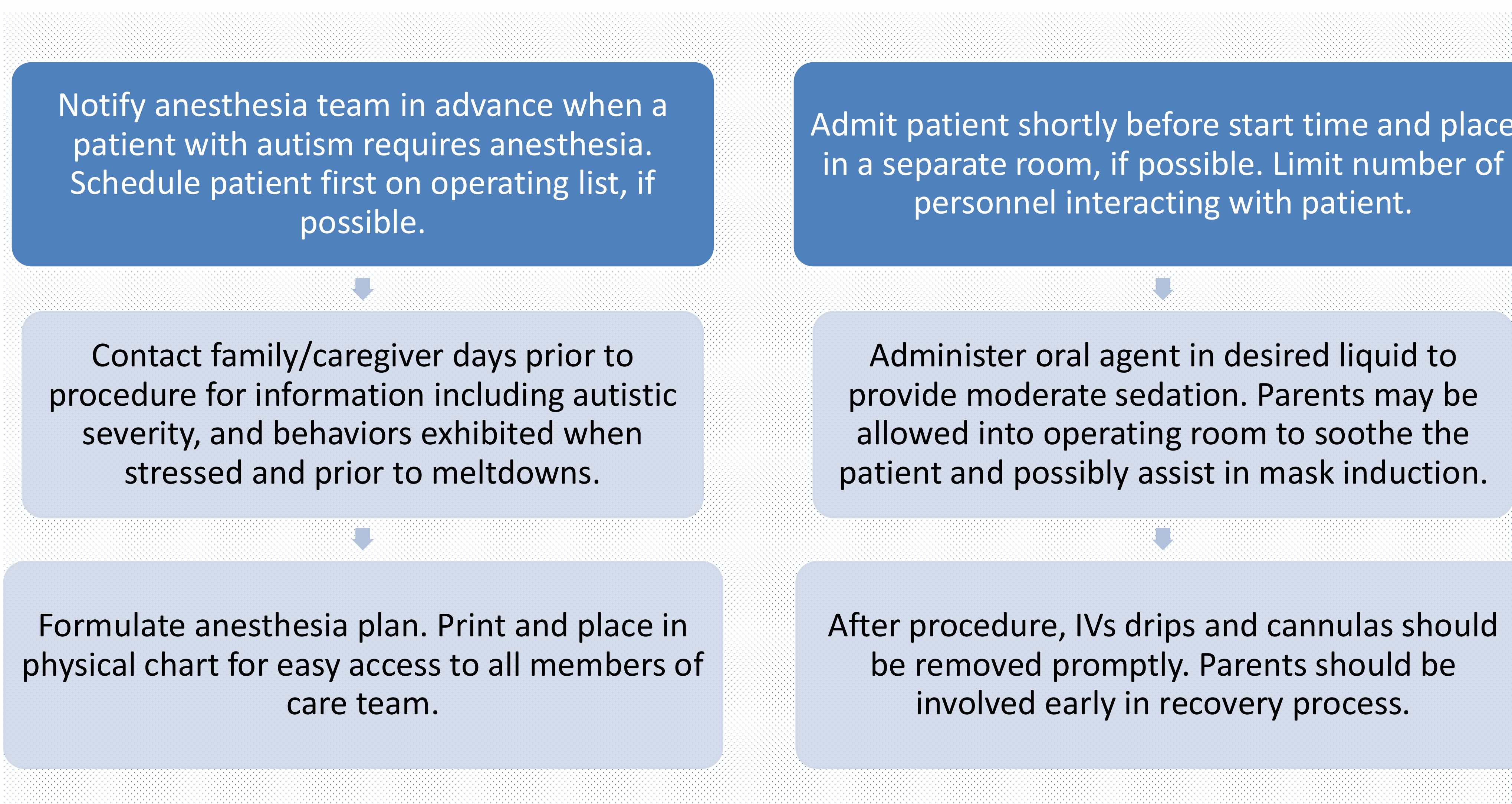


Figure 2: Proposed preparations and accommodations for a patients with autism requiring anesthesia. Implementation of these steps decreased lack of cooperation amongst patients by 50%. Increased satisfaction was also expressed by both caregivers and medical personnel caring for these patients^{5, 6, 7}.

Discussion

- Medical providers often lack familiarity with the care of patients with autism. Therefore, advance preparation is essential in these cases, as outlined in **Figure 2**.
- When explaining procedure to patients with autism, the use of supplemental materials (e.g. picture charts) may be beneficial.
- The use of media, such as video peer modeling, may lower anxiety of patients undergoing certain procedures⁸.
- If possible, parents should be encouraged to bring a toy or other item that comforts their child.

Important Considerations

- Difficulty with communication may not be contingent with a difficulty with understanding information.
- When obtaining informed consent, patients may be presented with information at a tolerable level and given the opportunity to express assent or dissent.
- Depending on the situation, a parent or guardian may need to provide informed consent.

References

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