

## **Autism spectrum disorders - social stereotypes and limits of expert knowledge**

Since the 1940s, not only the scope of research and social campaigns devoted to autism has been systematically growing, but also the number of people diagnosed with disorders from this spectrum. The observed increase in issued diagnoses has become so significant, that the problem has become a challenge on the social scale and has occurred in the broadly understood social awareness (see: CDC report: Baio et.al. 2014). Despite the continuous deepening of the knowledge about this type of disorders, their causes are still undetermined.

However this increasing "popularity" of autism combined with the lack of definitive conclusions as to its origins and also with too low level of knowledge among experts - midwives, paediatricians, psychologists, psychiatrists, etc. – has caused an occurrence of significant number of negative stereotypes, myths, simplified reasonings and cognitive errors around it (see e.g. CBOS Report "Social Image of Autism", March 2018).

The aim of the lecture is a) to draw attention to the problem of unreliable opinions issued, among others, by medical examiners and court experts in cases concerning persons with ASD and b) to analyze possible causes of this state of affairs. It is suspected that these causes can be found in the occurrence of the aforementioned stereotypes in the inferences of these experts and in the existence of the negative impact of heuristics and intuitive judgments on their cognitive disposition.

Due to the very limited time usually available for the examination of each case, opinions issued by these specialists have to be largely based on intuitive decisions (cf. e.g. Chase, Simon 1973; Simon 1992; Kahneman, Klein 2009; Kahnemann 2012). Regardless of what perspective on intuitive judgements will be accepted, researchers agree that the prerequisite for obtaining appropriate cognitive disposition, necessary for these judgements correctness, is a long-term practical application of the possessed expertise and obtaining good quality feedback on the decisions taken (e.g. Damasio 2006, Ericsson 2008, Kahneman, Klein 2009).

Failure to meet these conditions by experts may result in committing systematic cognitive errors resulting from, among others, basing intuitive decisions on stereotypes existing in the expert's mind. This situation may have a significant, negative impact on the further development of a person with ASD, as opinions issued by experts condition subsequent access to the state's systemic support - including therapeutic support.

During the lecture, a scientific project aiming to examine the above mentioned issue will also be presented.