

# Mental Wellness in People with Down Syndrome and IDD during Covid-19

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# Disclosures

- No financial disclosures
  - This is an important issue as related to clinical trials

# Pandemic Associated Stressors

- Health risk (entire family)
- Sheltering associated tensions and family/staff dysfunction (including abuse)
- Risk of placement/respite breakdown
- Economic pressures from lay-offs/furloughs
- Change from usual routine
- Reduced activity level (and increased weight)
- Separation from friends and extended family
- Separation from work and/or day program
- Increased medical problems (reduced access)

# Potential Mental Health Issues

- Anxiety (health, separation, compulsive, other)
- Depression and/or irritability
- Increased behavioral problems and/or regression in cognitive or self-care skills
- Increased sleep problems
- Non-compliance with safety-related behaviors leading to increased conflict
  - masks, hand-washing, social distancing, drooling

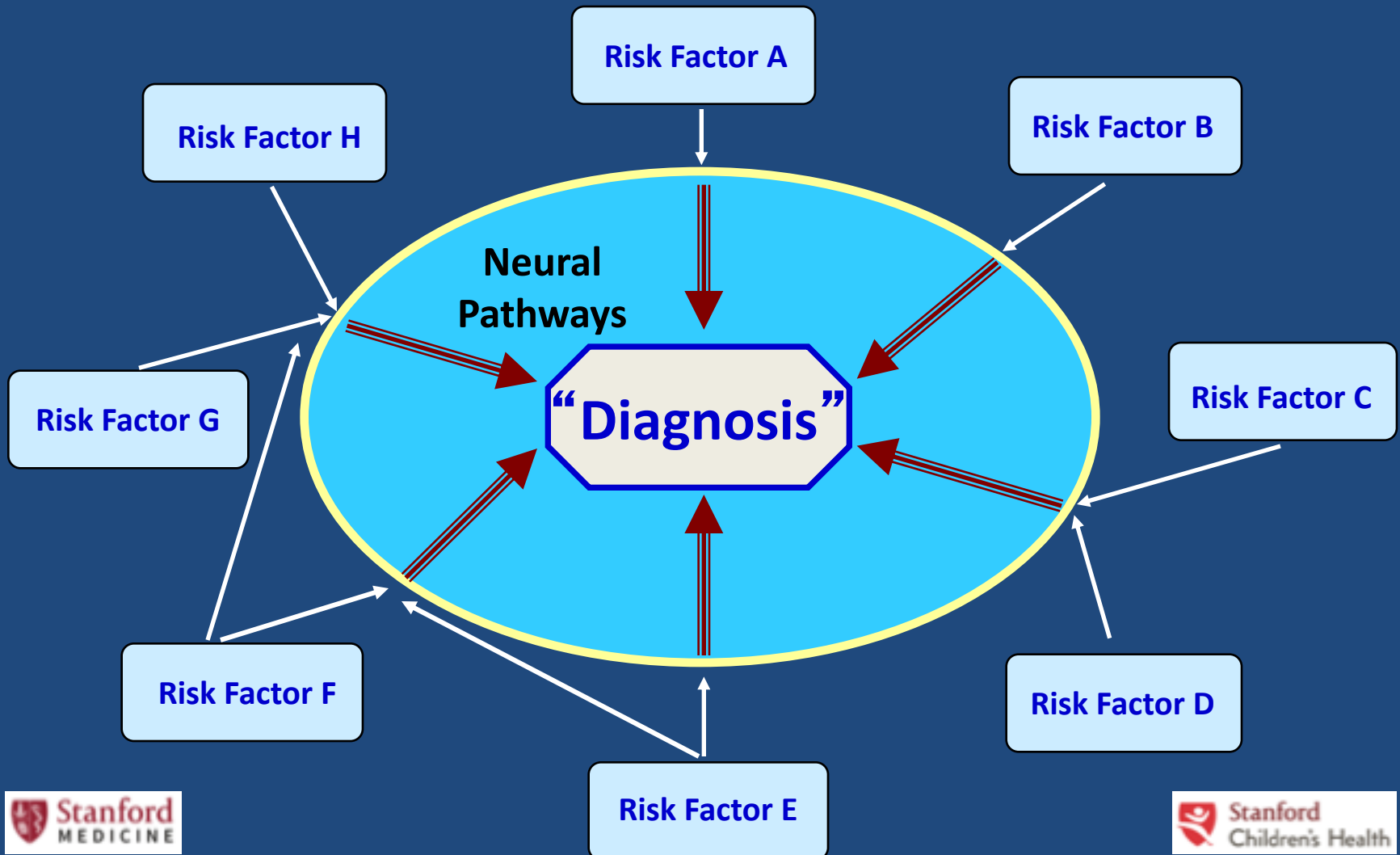
# Potential Approaches - 1

- Identify individual profile of risk and resilience
- Consistent and repetitive positive reassurance and role-modeling
- Increase preparation for daily activity/routine changes (multi-sensory)
- Create daily activity schedule
- Activity/exercise
- Enhance practice/repetition of self-care skills
- Create opportunities for social interaction

# Potential Approaches - 2

- Differential attention
- Behavioral intervention (by telemedicine)
- Family therapy (by telemedicine)
- Medication (usually not first-line)
- Advocate for access to health resources (e.g., metabolic, sleep)

# DSM Disorders – What do the Scientific Data Say?



# Some Recent Papers

- Courtenay et al. COVID-19 and people with intellectual disability: Impacts of a pandemic. Irish J Psychol Med 2020
- Hassiotis et al. In the time of the pandemic: Safeguarding people with developmental disabilities against the impact of coronavirus. J Ment Health Res Intellec Disab 2020.
- Fegert et al. Challenges and burden of the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic for child and adolescent mental health. Child Adolesc Psychiatry Ment Health 2020



Thanks!