

Understanding PANS: When Inflammation Hijacks the Brain

PANS (Pediatric Acute-Onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome) is a condition marked by sudden onset of serious neuropsychiatric symptoms in children. It can dramatically change a child's behavior overnight.



In collaboration with-

Flying through Fog

Learning for therapists: Taking Science and Making It Accessible

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What Is PANS?

Sudden onset of serious neuropsychiatric symptoms, most commonly obsessive-compulsive behaviors (OCD) and/or restrictive food intake as well as anxiety, and other emotional or behavioral changes



Sudden Onset

Symptoms appear rapidly, often within a day or two.



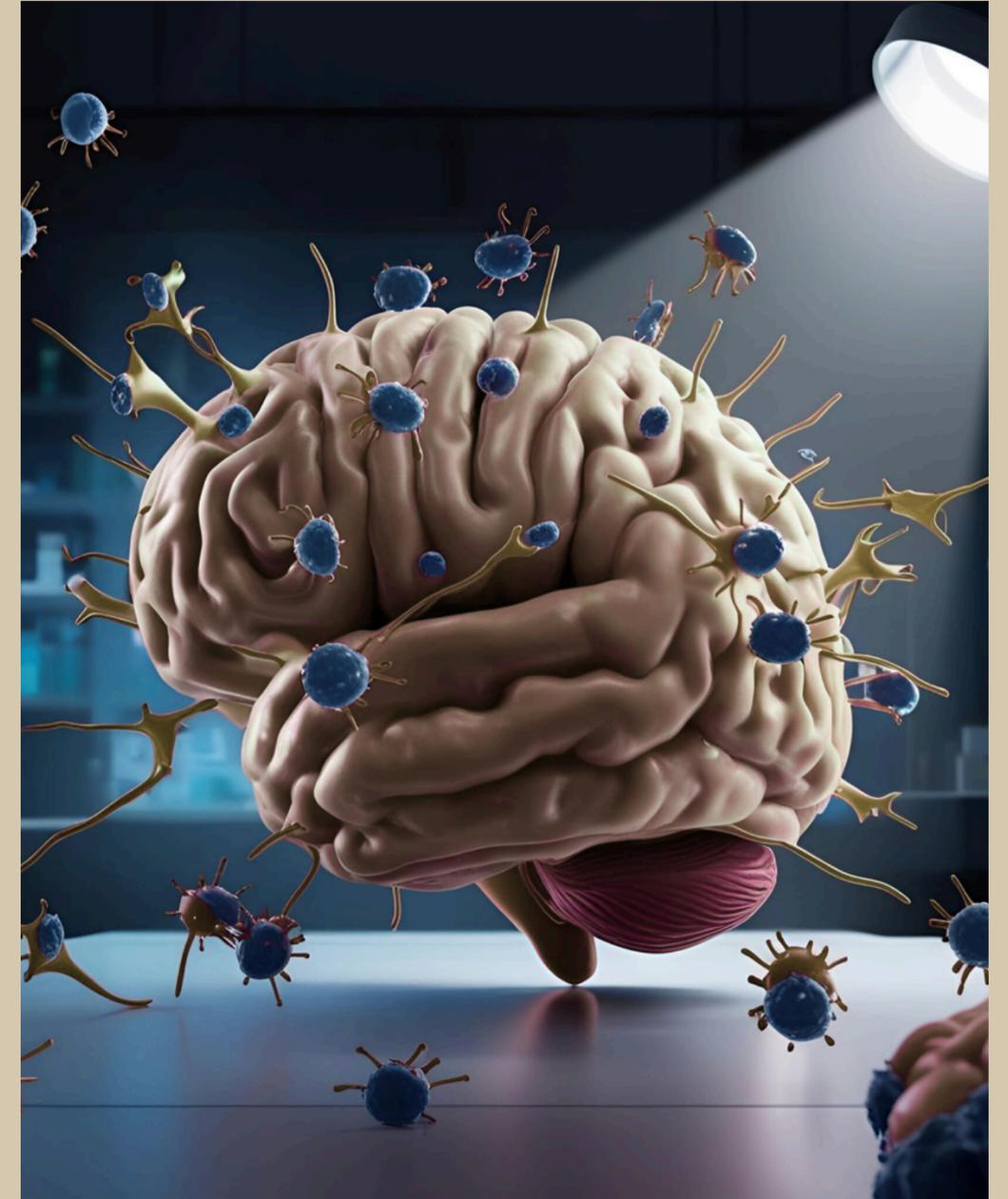
Immune Connection

Thought to be linked to immune system responses to infections or environmental triggers.



Brain Inflammation

Body's defense system mistakenly targets healthy brain areas; especially the basal ganglia.



Common Symptoms

OCD Behaviors
Repetitive checking, handwashing,
intrusive thoughts

Mood Changes
Anxiety, mood swings, aggression

Core
Symptoms

Eating Restrictions

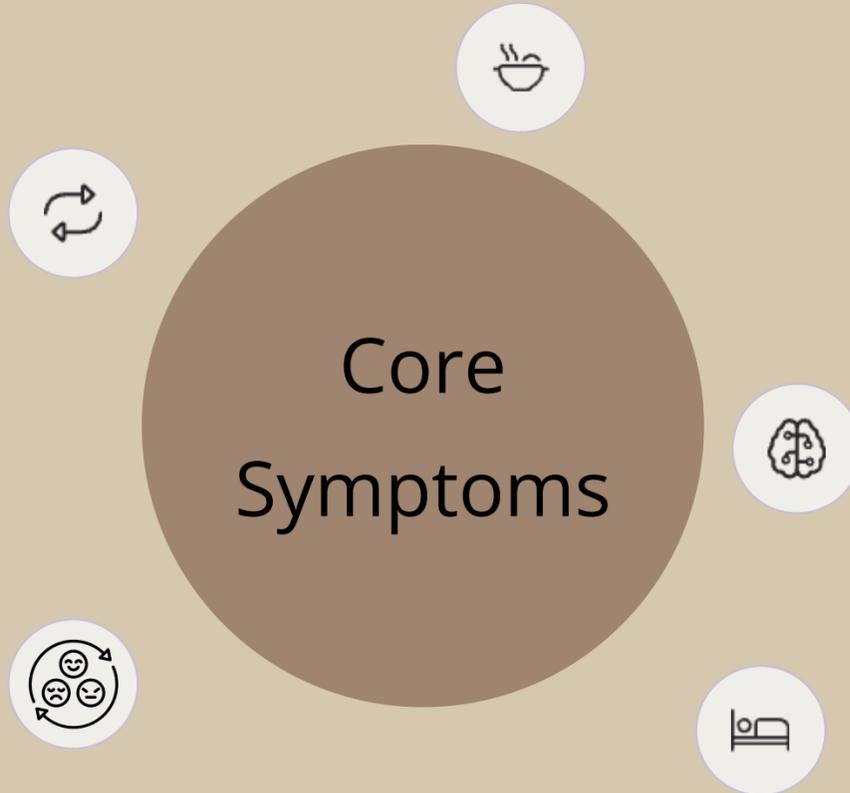
Food avoidance due to sensory issues or fears

Cognitive Changes

Academic difficulties, concentration problems

Sleep Issues

Night-time fears, disrupted sleep patterns



What Causes PANS?

While there is still research being done, it is thought that PANS is triggered by a combination of factors such as the following...



Infections

Group A Streptococcus and other bacterial or viral illnesses



Environmental Stressors

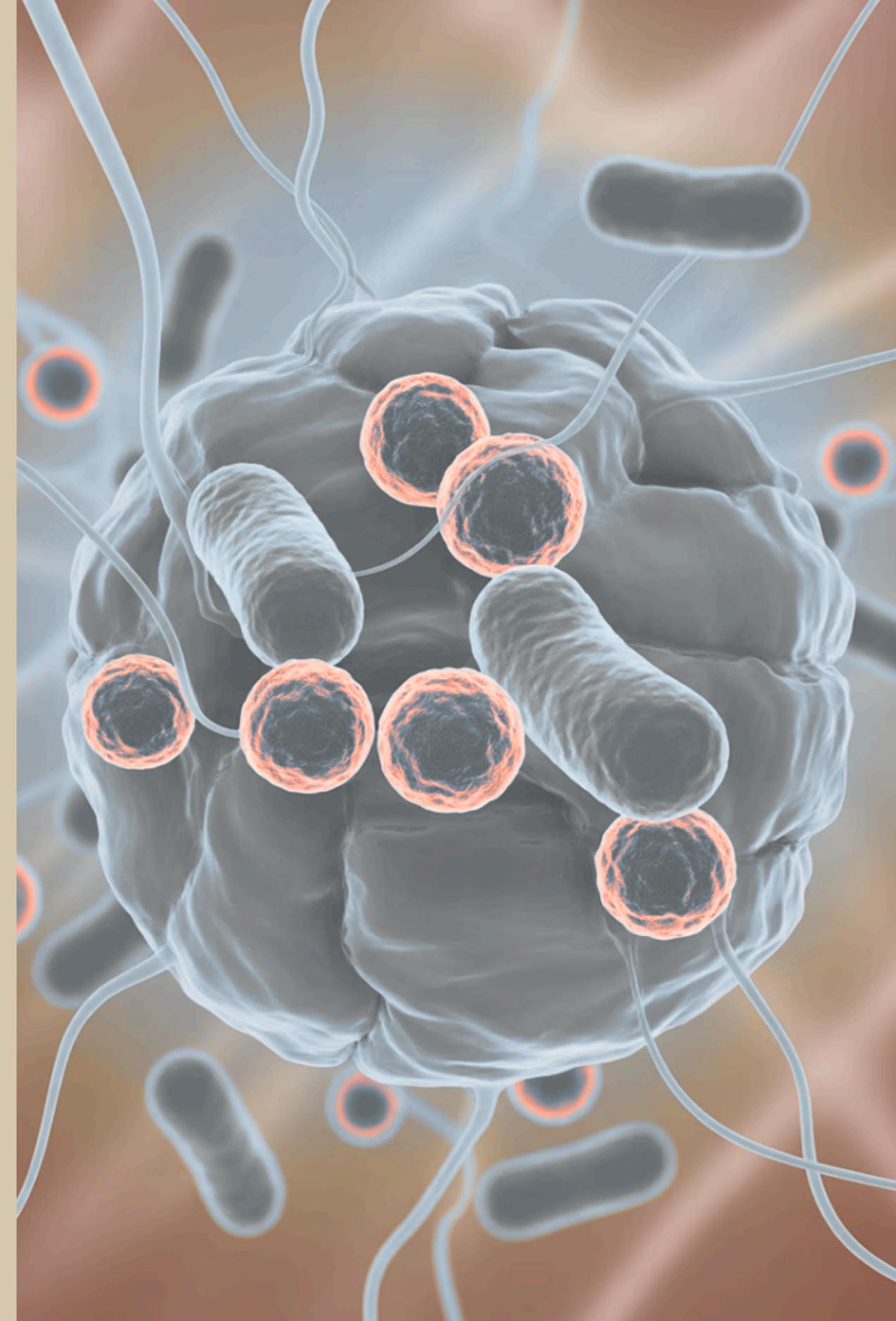
Emotional trauma or exposure to toxins may play a role



Immune Dysfunction

Autoimmune reaction causing brain inflammation

PANS is not caused by just one factor but a combination of triggers affecting a child's nervous system.





Diagnosis Process- A clinical diagnosis

Medical History Review

Thorough evaluation of symptoms and their sudden onset.

Neurological Evaluation

Psychological assessments and evaluation behavioral changes.

Laboratory Testing

Blood tests to rule out infections and/or inflammation markers.

Advanced Imaging

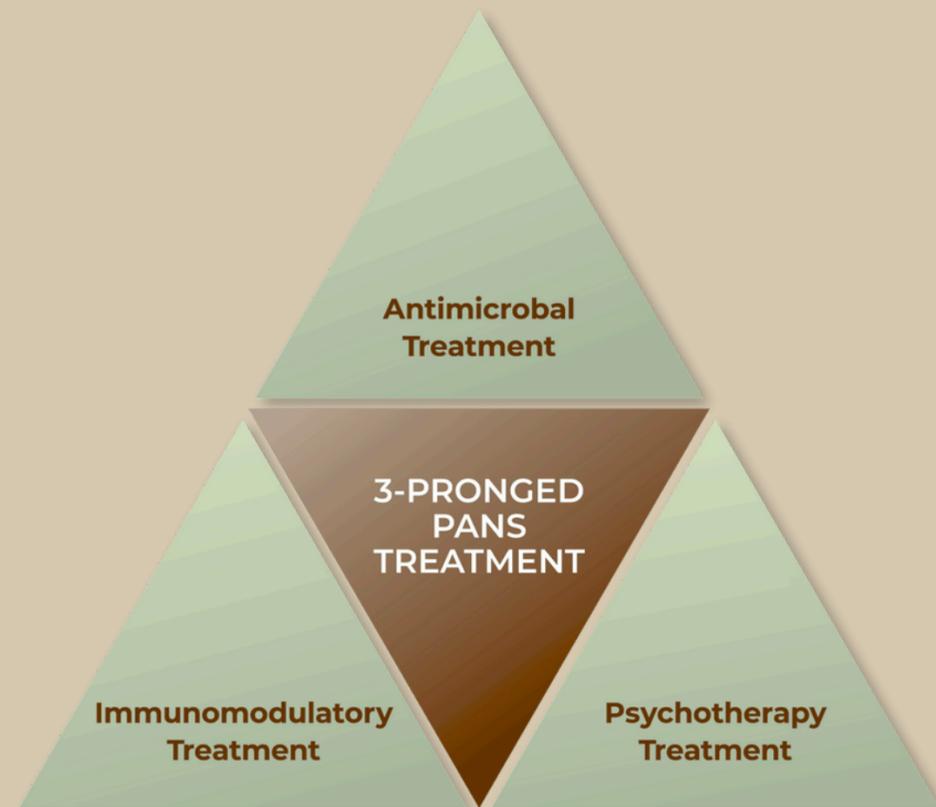
MRI or EEG may be used to look for signs of brain inflammation.

Diagnosis can be challenging as PANS shares symptoms with many psychiatric conditions like OCD, anxiety disorders, ADHD, or behavioral changes.

Treatment Approaches: 3-Prong Approach to Care

Medical Treatment

- Antibiotics for infections
- Anti-inflammatory medications
- Immune-modulating therapies such as steroids and in some cases IVIG



Psychological Support

- Clinical assessment with a PANS-literate mental health provider to determine best treatment modalities based on current needs and severity
- Careful medication management
- Assessment of parental burnout
- Assessment of effect upon family functioning and siblings

Family Support

- Psychoeducation for families
- Behavioral strategies for home
- School accommodations
- Parent burnout assessment



Why Proper Diagnosis Matters

Beyond Standard Care

PANS treatment often requires more than typical psychiatric approaches.

Family Empowerment

Correct diagnosis helps families feel empowered understand and plan appropriate care.

Targeted Treatment

Addressing the immune component is crucial for effective management.

Ongoing Monitoring

Symptoms can wax and wane, requiring regular assessment and adjustments.

PANS can look a lot like other disorders, but the sudden onset and immune connection set it apart

Hope for Recovery

100%

Treatable

PANS is real and treatable with proper care.

3

Care Components

Medical, psychological, and family support are essential.



Improvement Rate

Many children see significant improvement with early intervention.

With early recognition, comprehensive care, and strong family support, healing is possible. You are not alone on this journey.



