

Controversial autism treatment reinstated by judge

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"have been found in neurotropic slow virus diseases (kuru and Creutzfeld-Jacob disease) of man." They add that "the detection of anti-NAFP was highly prevalent among the household contacts of autistic patients, like the household contacts of most patients with degenerative disorders of the brain, [suggesting] the association of an infectious agent... in the etiology of the disease."

When study subjects received immunotherapy treatments, the researchers report, 13 slept better, verbalized more, and had better attention spans. Subjects without the anti-NAFP defect did not improve.

Peter Fischinger, vice president of research for the university, argues that without blind studies it is impossible to determine if Fudenberg's treatment is effective, or if patients' progress is simply due to a "placebo effect." He notes that patients with autism and other disorders Fudenberg treats (including Alzheimer's and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome), "patients go through cycles of improvement and regression for no known reason."

Coleman counters that "the response to this drug is nothing that could happen in the natural course of this disease [autism]." Fudenberg says that careful screening and purification are done prior to transfusions, that patients are at far less risk of accidental infection than other blood recipients, and that only the most severe cases are accepted for treatment. He also notes that the procedure was approved by the University of California at San Francisco and by the FDA when he worked there.

At the time the FDA and the university suspended his work, Fudenberg was treating eighty patients. One reportedly committed suicide after treatment was stopped, and dozens of others wrote letters protesting the actions of the FDA and the university.

The judge who issued the temporary restraining order in this case commented, "this court does not take lightly the fact that it is enjoining directives of two government agencies . . . However, this court cannot sit idly by and allow any further delay that is required for such agencies to act when to do

so would place so many lives in jeopardy and would be likely to create so much human suffering."

(Editor's Note: Readers of ARRI will be apprised of further developments in this story. It should be emphasized that whether or not some forms of autism involve a slow-acting virus, autism is NOT a contagious disorder.)

"Immunodiagnosis and immunotherapy in autistic children," V. K. Singh, H. H. Fudenberg, D. Emerson and M. Coleman; *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1988, p. 602. Also: "Transfer factor: past, present, and future," H. H. Fudenberg. Address for both: H. Hugh Fudenberg, Department of Microbiology and Immunology, Medical University of South Carolina, 171 Ashley Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina 29425.

—and—

"Doctor defends his work," *The State*, Charleston, South Carolina, October 27, 1989; and "Judge allows doctor to resume controversial blood treatments," also in *The State*, November 15, 1989.

Dogs, dolphins earn an "A" as teaching tools

Dogs at school? It could be a good idea for autistic students, according to a new study.

Laurel Redefer and Joan Goodman observed the behaviors of 12 autistic-like children before, during and after 18 sessions of "animal therapy." In these sessions, a therapist modeled holding, touching, grooming, feeding, and playing games with a dog.

Redefer and Goodman report that "as soon as the dog was introduced, there was a sharp increase in social interaction" and a decrease in isolation. Both improvements lasted throughout the sessions with the dog. A follow-up one month after sessions with the dog ended showed that the children's social interaction had dropped, but was still higher than before "animal therapy."

The researchers say that even children with dogs at home reacted positively to the classroom dog. The dog itself was less important, they emphasize, than the therapist's orchestration of social activities revolving around the animal.

Dolphins increase learning speed

The findings of this study are similar to those of a 1988 study by Florida researcher David Nathanson, who found that dolphins can help developmentally disabled children learn much more quickly than usual. The children in Nathanson's program learned language tasks much faster when taught using the dolphin approach (in which dolphins retrieved plastic pictures of objects the children were learning to label) than when taught in a standard classroom setting.

A similar 1987 study conducted by Jorge

Pina at the "Dolphins Plus" program in Florida showed that autistic students who worked with dolphins showed more progress in eye contact, spontaneous communication and interaction than autistic students who learned the same tasks without the dolphins.

A number of anecdotal reports support the theory that animals can be good teaching tools. ARRI Advisory Board Member Pedro Paulo Rocha, whose own autistic daughter has benefitted greatly from having a dog, notes in the Brazilian publication "Autismo em Revista" that psychologist Molina Loza is having success with a program using animals.

Rocha also reports that an autistic boy in Canada who received a dog from the Canine Companions for Independence program "has become more communicative and more self-confident, reduced his mannerisms and improved his behavior," and that neighbors are more likely to socialize with the boy because the dog is an "ice-breaker."

Pets not "put off" by rejection

Researchers speculate that autistic children relate to dogs because the animals are aggressively social, tolerant, playful, and, in the classroom, novel and unexpected. In addition, Redefer and Goodman note, "they are demanding—likely to follow, lick, and bark at the rejecting child," unlike human contacts who may be put off by rejection. Nathanson says the dolphins are helpful because they relax the children and keep their attention. Further, Redefer and Goodman note, animals' "simple, repetitive nonverbal actions" are easy for autistic individuals to understand.

"Brief Report: Pet-facilitated therapy with autistic children," Laurel A. Redefer and Joan F. Goodman; *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, Vol. 19, No. 3, September 1989. Address: either author at the Graduate School of Education, Univ. of Pennsylvania.

—and—

"Dog therapy," Pedro Paulo Rocha, "Autismo em Revista;" see also, Pedro Paulo Rocha, *No Vale das Sombras: Uma Incursao ao Mundo do Autista* (book). Address: Pedro Paulo Rocha, estrada da Canoa 401 (22610) S. Conrado, Rio, Brasil.

—and—

"Scientists use dolphins to boost learning ability of handicapped children," Laura Ost, *Orlando Sentinel*, June 1988.

Call for Papers

The 1990 Conference of the Autism Society of America will be held in Buena Park, California, July 11-14. The theme of the conference is "Looking Ahead." Papers and suggestions for panels are welcome, and can be submitted to Kitty Rivet, conference chairperson, P.O. Box 15247, Long Beach, CA 90815. Deadline is January 31.

A research conference on "Experimental Psychology and the Autistic Syndromes" will be held April 18-20 at Durham University in Durham, England. Professionals are invited to submit abstracts (100-200 words) to: Autism Research Unit, School of Pharmaceutical and Chemical Sciences, Sunderland Polytechnic, Sunderland SR2 7EE, UK.