

F/C (continued)

ARRI, parents, teachers, and caretakers throughout the U.S. are being accused, via F/C, of physical and sexual child abuse. Such allegations are being reported to authorities, with devastating consequences. The Autism Research Institute hears about many such cases. It is clear that the frequency of such reports is increasing. Many of these cases have already been decided. In all of the 20 or so cases we are aware of in which the matter has been resolved, the allegations have been judged false or not credible. In many of these situations, the accused feel that they have been badly injured, and are not satisfied to let the matter rest:

—**\$6 million lawsuit:** In Kingston, New York, Mark and Laura Storch announced that they would be joining other injured parents, teachers and caregivers in a nationwide suit against "all responsible parties" being organized by several attorneys including Alan Zweibel, who successfully defended them and other families from F/C-based allegations of child abuse (see ARRI 6/3).

—**\$2.5 million suit:** In Los Angeles, a 27-year-old teacher who had been accused, via F/C, of sexually molesting four of his teenaged handicapped male students announced, after the charges were dropped, that he is initiating a 2.5 million dollar lawsuit against the facilitators, the school district, and other parties. The teacher, who faced a 90-year prison term if convicted, was quoted by the *L.A. Times* as saying,

"All I ever wanted to be was a special education teacher. I don't have a career in teaching any more. My parents have aged 10 years because of this."

—**\$700,000 suit:** In Indianapolis, Michael Coulson and Robin Lockridge are initiating a \$700,000 lawsuit against the facilitators, the school officials and other parties after a superior court judge concluded, on the basis of a court-supervised evaluation, that their 10-year-old multi-handicapped daughter could not in fact have made the allegations.

"The fact that the law requires allegations of abuse to be reported will not protect these defendants," said Zweibel, "because the evidence shows clearly that the allegations came from the facilitators, and not the handicapped persons."

THE CHILD ABUSE SYSTEM. Being charged with abuse is much worse than being charged with any other crime, since the law considers you guilty until proven innocent. Recently the ARI learned about a case in Springfield, Massachusetts, in which a man had been in jail for five months as the

result of allegations, based only on F/C, that he had molested a 16-year-old autistic boy. In the courtroom, the judge asked for a demonstration of the boy's skill with facilitation. In the facilitator's absence, the boy was shown a hammer, a candle, a pewter bird, and a silk flower. The boy verbally said the word "flower." When the facilitator was called back in, she reported that the boy had been shown a pencil and a history book.

Rather than simply dismiss the case at that point, the judge agreed to give the prosecution another week to find more expert witnesses. "But they've already had a month," protested the lawyer for the defendant. "That's enough out of you," shot back the judge. The prisoner then asked if he might speak with his sister, who was in the courtroom. "No," the judge replied, and the prisoner was taken back to jail, for, probably, at least another month.

When allegations of child abuse are made, the accused are not only considered guilty, but they are treated with contempt, indifference and hostility by the legal system. A deplorable situation!

LETTERS (continued)

tested programs, against the wishes of parents. Inclusion may be the perfect answer for some autistic children, but it is NOT the answer for all of them.

To the Editor: (re vitamin B6)

We learned about the potential benefits of vitamin B6 through the ARRI. After one week on the vitamin, our son showed signs of improved attention, less aberrant behavior at home and in public and more interest in his environment. Over time, these beneficial effects extended into his dietary and personal habits, communication skills and interaction with people. There is a diminution in the amplitude of emotional swings and aggressive actions directed towards family members and teachers. He is more receptive to constructive ways in which to deal with anger, frustration and disappointment.

Objectively, he is doing better in school compared to one year ago at this time. He is also followed by one of the major child study centers in the United States, which has confirmed through observation and testing marked improvement in many areas of behavior and knowledge. We can do many things together, including bicycle riding, bowling and other activities which were almost impossible before starting B6.

There is no magic cure for autism, [but] vitamin B6 helped our son dramatically by reducing the degree of negative behaviors, which in turn, has encouraged him to explore and benefit from his environment in a way never before possible.

Deborah Berliner

Steven H. Berliner, MD, FACS, FACOG

To the Editor: (re vitamin B6)

My 19-year-old autistic son, Aaron, has always loved watching videos by himself. He has always left the room, even during his favorite movies, rather than sit and watch

with the whole family. Two weeks ago, Aaron started B6/magnesium therapy. Last Sunday, he watched a whole movie with the family from beginning to end. This has never happened before. Another unusual, although small, change, is his new interest in what to wear to school. Two days in the last two weeks, Aaron has dressed himself in what we would call dressier or more fashionable clothes. Aaron's changes may be small, but they are wonderful.

Jackie Hammond
Las Vegas, NV

To the Editor: (re seizures and DMG)

My brother has fragile X syndrome, mental retardation, and autism. He has been plagued with seizures for many years, often having several minor motor seizures a day. After a particularly bad run of non-stop, back-to-back seizures, he was taken to the emergency room.

[After leaving the hospital], he continued to have seizures. He was still getting phenobarbital, mysoline, and dilantin. I called the ARI and found out about DMG. I immediately bought some and sent it to his facility. They gave it to him. *He has not had a single seizure since.* It has been over three weeks.

Ever since [my brother] started taking the DMG (125 mg two times a day), he has been talking a blue streak. He is talking about a variety of subjects and is using more phrases and sentences. He even told a nurse, "I told you no. N-O!" He has never spelled anything before. He is also counting. He is happy as a lark. He is better able to control himself if something upsets him. Thanks to the Autism Research Institute, we now see some light at the end of his tunnel.

Kristin Zhivago
Menlo Park, CA

Editor's note: Delighted! Others have also reported DMG to stop drug-resistant seizures. See New England Journal of Medicine, 10/21/82, pp. 1081-1082.

Diet interventions

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times useful for autistic individuals. They add that the effectiveness of vitamin B6 in reducing symptoms of autism in many individuals may be due to its role in breaking down peptides.

Reichelt and colleagues put their autistic subjects on a gluten- and/or casein-free diet for more than two years, and noted improvements in social relationships, decreases in bizarre behavior, and decreases in seizure frequency.

—**and—**
"Celiac disease, epilepsy and cerebral calcifications," Giuseppe Gobbi et al., *The Lancet*, August 22, 1992, pp. 439-443. Address: Giuseppe Gobbi, Servizio Di Neuropsichiatria Infantile, USL9, Via Amendola 2, 42100 Reggio Emilia, Italy.

—**and—**
"Probable etiology and possible treatment of childhood autism," Karl L. Reichelt, Ann-Mari Knivsberg, Gunnar Lind, and Magne Nodland; *Brain Dysfunction*, 1991, No. 4, pp. 308-319. Address: Karl Reichelt, Department of Pediatric Research, University of Oslo, Rikshospitalet, Oslo, Norway.

—**and—**
"Proteins, peptides and autism: part 1," Katherine Williams, Paul Shattock, and Thomas Berney; *Brain Dysfunction*, 1991, No. 4, pp. 320-322; and "Proteins, peptides and autism: part 2," Paul Shattock and Gillian Lowdon; *Brain Dysfunction*, 1991, No. 4, pp. 323-334. Address for both: Paul Shattock, Autism Research Unit, School of Pharmaceutical and Chemical Sciences, Faculty of Science, Sunderland Polytechnic, Sunderland, UK.