

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK/Bernard Rimland, Ph.D.**Our children: victims of both autism and dogma**

In the morning's mail was a letter from my keen-eyed friend Ted Melnechuk, who, it seems, reads everything, and often sends me clippings of special interest. This clipping was a four-page article from the August 10 *New York Times Magazine*, and Ted had penned across the top: "Bernie: Stick to your guns!" I was delighted to see that the article was about Kilmer McCully.

I've never met Kilmer McCully, but I've known about him since the 1970s, and had been thinking about him a lot during the past year. In fact, I'd mentioned him in a recent ARRI editorial (ARRI 10/3).

Why was a four-page article about Kilmer McCully in the *New York Times Magazine*? McCully had been a highly regarded pathologist at the Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital until he was "let go" in the late '70s. He wasn't just let go—he had become an object of great hostility. "McCully would hear of a job opening, go for interviews, and the process would grind to a stop. Finally, he heard rumors of what he calls 'poison phone calls' from Harvard." It took legal intervention to stop the campaign of vilification against him.

What was his crime? How had he generated such animosity? He had committed the cardinal sin—especially for a medical school professor—of suggesting that increasing the intake of certain vitamins could save people's lives. He was right, but that didn't matter. People, including "scientists," tend to hate those who challenge their beliefs.

In our ARRI editorial last year, I briefly mentioned a study by Ellis and McCully which found that elderly patients given 100-300 mg of vitamin B6 over a period of years who died of a heart attack had an average age at death of 84.5 years—eight years more of life than heart attack victims from the same county who did not take vitamin B6.

The truth sometimes emerges despite the best efforts of the authorities to protect us from it. The media, including the cover story of *Newsweek* (August 11, 1997), tell us, as McCully tried to decades ago, that vitamin B6, folic acid, and B12 play an important role in protecting against heart attacks.

McCully is but the most recent of a long list of pioneers who suffered outrageous injustices at the hands of dogmatic authorities who are so sure that they are right that they never trouble themselves to consider the evidence. How many millions of lives would have been saved if the authorities had been less smug?

It has been estimated that over 100,000 British sailors died a horrible death from scurvy in the 60 years between the time Dr. Lind discovered that lime juice (a source of

vitamin C) would prevent—and cure—scurvy and the time his discovery was implemented. Lives that could have been saved by vitamin B6, and vitamin C, were sacrificed to dogma. "Don't bother me with the facts."

Autistic children have been, and still are, very much the victims of dogma. Every day I hear from mothers that their children's pe-

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diatricians, neurologists, or psychiatrists proclaimed that vitamin B6 will not help their children, and in fact may very well cause harm. Never mind that 18 consecutive studies have shown B6 to be helpful in autism, and no study has reported detrimental effects to any autistic child. Never mind that all of the drugs used for autism (except Nystatin, an antifungal) can and do cause harm.

Autistic children have been the victims of dogma from the very beginning, when autism was declared an emotional disorder, brought on by covert maternal rejection. This dogma was universally believed and caused immense harm to the children and their families, in the total absence of substantiating evidence.

The next damaging dogma was the belief that behavior modification was futile in autism. It was a good way to teach a dog to roll over, or a seal to balance a ball on his nose, the parents were told, but a treatment for autism—absurd! A major reason for my having founded the Autism Society of America in 1965 was to spread the word to parents across the U.S. that behavior modification could make a big difference.

It is now very well established that, contrary to prevailing dogma:

—yeast infections, usually brought on by antibiotic overuse, can cause or exacerbate autism.

—intolerances to certain foods, particularly cow's milk and certain cereals including wheat, can cause autism.

—vaccinations, whatever their value to some children, can cause autism in others.

—auditory integration therapy (AIT), however counterintuitive it may be, can and does often produce significant improvement.

Each of the foregoing causes/treatments

is well documented and quite plausible from a purely scientific standpoint, but each is politically incorrect in terms of currently accepted dogma. And the children are worse off as a result.

The topics listed above by no means exhaust the list of topics on which data and dogma collide. The underlying conflict is between conventional medicine ("try this or that drug") and alternative medicine, which seeks means of helping the body heal itself.

Biological Therapy: To me the most exciting frontier is an area of great interest and great ferment at the moment. For want of a better term, I'll call it Biological Therapy, at least tentatively. It entails the injection, infusion or implantation of complex biological products, of human or animal origin, into the autistic child to stimulate a therapeutic response. Examples are IVIG infusion (ARRI 10/3, 11/1) and transfer factor therapy (ARRI 11/2). IVIG is being studied as a treatment in a series of multi-center trials. Transfer factor therapy is far more controversial (ARRI 3/4).

Cell therapy, involving the injection of cells from certain organs taken from fetal farm animals (usually sheep) has been practiced in Europe for fifty years, and has been used on millions of patients, including many Down Syndrome patients and some autistic children, with reported good results and no significant adverse effects. (Dr. Hans Kugler told me some years ago about a Down Syndrome child born in a large West Coast Medical Center. "Hopeless," the parents were told. They took the child to Dr. Franz Schmid in Germany for cell therapy, which brought such great improvement that the delighted parents brought the child back to the prestigious medical center in the U.S. "This couldn't be the same child," they were told, "or we made a wrong diagnosis." Dogma dies hard.)

FGF Therapy: Dr. Luis Aguilar of Mexico has used a different approach, injections of FGF (fibroblast growth factor), with what so far appear to be promising results.

A compilation of recent papers on Biological Therapies is available on request from ARI to those donating \$10 or more.

The Autism Research Institute's Defeat Autism Now! (DAN!) project has as a major goal the bringing together of pioneers and advocates in these various controversial fields so they may share their knowledge and expertise. They will be doing so at our DAN! conference in San Diego on September 19-21 (see page 7). Persuade your child's doctors to come and to learn.

To protect your right to benefit from alternative medicine, tell your Senators and Representatives to support the Access to Medical Treatment Act (AMTA) (S.578, H.R.746).