

SAVE THE DATES!

**Upcoming
Defeat Autism Now!
(DAN!)
Conferences:
May 10-11, Boston
Oct. 26-27, San Diego**

Preliminary study finds correlation between heavy metals, autism

C. Holloway and colleagues recently reported preliminary evidence strongly implicating heavy metal toxicity in the development of autism.

The researchers evaluated 50 "autism families" and 30 control families, and found that:

- Maternal consumption of seafood exceeding two servings per month was linked to a 3.5 times increased risk of having an autistic child.
- Autistic subjects had an average of 10 ear infections during their first three years, compared to two for the control subjects. The occurrence of more than eight ear infections was linked to an eight-fold increased risk of having autism. The researchers say this may be because antibiotics almost completely prevent excretion of mercury.
- Children with autism excreted slightly less mercury and lead in their hair than control subjects, indicating that they have an impaired ability to eliminate heavy metals.
- Children with autism had more severe reactions to vaccinations (many of which contained toxic mercury) than control subjects.
- Forty percent of the autistic children exhibited pica (the eating of non-food items), a behavior that increases their exposure to heavy metals.

"Thus," says co-researcher James B. Adams, "we hypothesize that stopping maternal consumption of seafood during pregnancy, greatly reducing use of oral antibiotics, and eliminating mercury from vaccines could greatly reduce the number of children with autism."

"Investigation of heavy metal toxicity in people with autism," C. Holloway, J. B. Adams, F. Castro, M. Kerr, and M. Margolis, presentation to the International Meeting for Autism Research (IMFAR), November 2001, San Diego, CA

—and—

James B. Adams, personal communication to FEAT Newsletter, December 4, 2001.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**MMR titers**

To the Editor:

I became concerned because of the MMR shot required [by my sons' school district]. Of my three sons, two had not yet had the shot. One has autism; the other has an IgG/IGA immune deficiency. How was I going to get around giving my boys a shot that might cause them more problems?

I spoke to my son's immunology specialist. I told him about the things I had read and heard [about the MMR vaccine and autism]. I asked if he would do an MMR titer on my son with the immune deficiency. He didn't agree with this approach, but was curious, so he specified the blood work for titers. Much to his surprise, the titer was more than sufficient for immunity. A minimum of 1.09 is required. My son's was 2.29. He was more than immune to the measles! No shots were needed. The doctor was very interested in the results and indicated that he may want to reconsider his approach to the MMR vaccine.

Shortly thereafter, it was time for my autistic son to have his annual physical and neurological check-up. I asked the doctor to draw an MMR titer for him as well. He too obliged and as suspected [my son's] readings were higher than the number required for immunity.

As a result of my experience, I urge all parents to make sure their children are not getting too much of something they don't need. If you want to have an MMR titer

Letters to the Editor are welcome. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and clarity. Letters should not exceed two pages in length, including references.

done, simply speak with your pediatrician or primary doctor.... If the titer reading is above normal and shows a sufficient immunity, simply submit one copy to your school of day care. They cannot tell you that the shot is still mandatory.

Mary Ann Kelly
President, Lehigh Valley Chapter,
Autism Society of America

Editor's Note: Many physicians believe that titers should always be done before assuming a vaccine is needed.

Teaching an autistic child to take pills

To the Editor:

We tried a great suggestion from my father (who is a good old-fashioned family doc) and taught our three-year-old son how to swallow pills. We started with tic-tacs (or other similar types and sizes of candies) and made a little game of trying to swallow the candy. Plenty of praise and a few containers of tic-tacs later, he could swallow them on his own. He now swallows ALL of his supplements with no problem (even big "horse" type pills that my husband admits he'd have trouble with!). He does the big ones by themselves, but swallows the small ones several at a time.

I feel very lucky that he has developed this skill because we tried mixing his supplements with juice and he was very particular about the taste. Now that he swallows his pills, we have been able to add cod liver oil, Pro EPA and some of the more "bitter" tasting supplements that he wouldn't take in juice or smoothies.

A pleased mom

Stress during pregnancy may be linked to autism

Women who experience highly stressful events during the 24th through 28th weeks of their pregnancy may be at increased risk of having an autistic child, according to a new study.

David Beversdorf and colleagues evaluated 188 mothers of autistic children, 212 mothers of non-disabled children, and 92 mothers of children with Down syndrome, asking the mothers to recall their stress levels during stressful events that occurred during their pregnancies. The researchers found that the numbers of women experiencing major stresses during any given four-week period during their pregnancies were fairly constant in the two control groups. The stress levels of the mothers of autistic children, however, were nearly twice as high as those of the other mothers.

"Researchers have been examining the genetic component of [autism] for years," Beversdorf says, "but there is now evidence through this study that autism is also linked to external factors, such as prenatal stress." He and his colleagues suggest that stress during certain times in prenatal development can lead to structural changes in the brain. In particular, they note that the timing of the stressful events recalled by mothers of autistic children tended to correlate with important periods of fetal cerebellar development. Defects of the autistic cerebellum have been reported by a number of researchers.

Presentation by David Beversdorf to the annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience, San Diego, November 2001. Address: David Beversdorf, Ohio State University Medical Center, Columbus, OH 43201.