

Study tests nutrients' role in reducing ear infections

A recent pilot study involving non-autistic children indicates that supplementing young children's diets with cod liver oil and vitamin-mineral supplements may reduce the incidence and severity of middle ear infections (otitis media).

[Editor's note: *The findings are of importance to parents and professionals dealing with autistic children, because antibiotics—most frequently prescribed to prevent ear infections—can kill beneficial gut flora and exacerbate behavioral and physical symptoms in children with autism.*]

Physician Linda Linday and colleagues took blood samples from 44 non-autistic children and found that the children had lower levels than adults of three substances: eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), an omega-3 fatty acid; vitamin A; and selenium. While previous studies had revealed lower vitamin A and selenium levels in children than in adults, Linday says, the decreased EPA levels were "a new and important finding." All three of the substances play key roles in preventing or reducing the effects of infections.

"We then hypothesized that these children might benefit medically if they were given these three key nutritional supplements," said study co-author Jay Dolitsky. To test their theory, the researchers asked parents to administer a teaspoon of lemon-flavored cod liver oil (which contains vitamin A and EPA) and a vitamin/mineral supplement containing selenium to seven children. They report that the children required antibiotics for otitis media for 12 percent fewer days during the time they took the supplements as compared to baseline, and that five of the seven did not suffer any additional ear infections for the remainder of the winter.

"This study," Linday says, "provides preliminary evidence that some episodes of otitis media may be prevented and that the reliance on antibiotics may be reduced among young children by using nutritional supplements." She cautions that larger, controlled trials are needed to confirm the findings.

An earlier study conducted by a research group in Finland (see ARRI 12/4) found that children who chew gum flavored with xylitol, a natural sweetener, have a significantly reduced incidence of ear infections.

"Lemon-flavored cod liver oil and a multivitamin-mineral supplement for the secondary prevention of otitis media in young children: pilot research," L. A. Linday, J. N. Dolitsky, R. D. Shindeldecker, and C. E. Pippenger, *Annals of Otolaryngology, Rhinology and Laryngology*, Vol. 111, No. 7, Part 1, July 2002, 642-52. Additional information is available at <http://www.dr.linday.com/abstract.htm>.

—and—

"Cod liver oil and a vitamin/mineral tablet may prevent middle ear infections in children," press release, New York Eye and Ear Infirmary, July 2002, <http://www.nyee.edu>.

LETTERS AND NOTICES

DMG causes remarkable gains

To the Editor:

My son is six and has cerebral palsy.

I was very excited when I read your article on DMG, and went out immediately to buy the tablets. My husband was the only other person who knew that I was giving our son the DMG. Twenty-four hours after I gave him DMG, the teacher's aide at his school was so excited to report the huge improvement in his work. She said he had improved from about 30 percent to about 70 percent with his work. She was so excited and said the other teachers were commenting on the huge improvement from the day before.

I'm not sure if it will continue. I hope and pray it will. His speech is basic, about 5 to 8 words. He seems to be trying to babble more. I will update you on how he improves, but so far, I am pleased with the results. I thank you very much for your article as it has given us hope.

Frances Mayes

Dana Point, CA

Editor's Note: DMG helps individuals with autism, Rett syndrome, Angelman syndrome, and now cerebral palsy.

Help for sound sensitivities

In ARRI 16-1 we published a letter from a parent calling attention to sound-canceling earphones which might be invaluable to families with autistic children who are acutely sound sensitive. The letter mentioned earphones produced by Bose (1-800-600-2073 ext Q1706; <http://www.bose.com/q1706>).

Our attention has been called to a similar sound-canceling earphone product from Sennheiser Electronics (1-860-434-9190; <http://www.sennheiser.com>).

If you have tried such devices, please let ARRI know if they have helped your child

—Editor

Dietary/biological intervention studies

To the Editor:

I've spent four solid days compiling a large list of references for studies regarding dietary and biological interventions for autism. I was surprised by how many supportive studies have actually been done and published. Most of the medical and scientific abstracts are from major peer-reviewed journals. This list should be a great resource for parents who are enlisting the support of their physicians. It will also be extremely helpful as a reference and resource for supportive physicians who are trying to get an overview of the science done to date.

This includes everything I was able to find that seemed relevant or useful, and I excluded

only a few that seemed redundant. Despite the time I put into it, I'm sure I missed some. If you know of additional studies that you would like to see included, please send them to me at kseroussi@autismndi.com.

Please look at www.autismndi.com/studies.htm to see the results.

Karyn Seroussi

ANDI (Autism Network for Dietary Intervention)

Marijuana use in autism

In ARRI 16-2 we published a letter from a mother whose large teenage autistic son's aggressive behavior had become intolerably dangerous, but had quickly subsided upon being given a marijuana-laced brownie. The continuing effect on his disposition has been remarkable. ARI has since received a two-page letter providing further information, as well as several website addresses. For a copy of the letter, send a SASE marked "marinon request" to ARI, or fax your request to 619-563-6840. The letter lists over 20 informative websites.

I am very unenthusiastic about drugs, but reality is much too complicated for reliance on rigid, "one-size-fits-all" rules. The marijuana-autism connection deserves serious attention and study.

—Editor

IN MEMORIAM **WILLIAM G. CROOK, M.D.** **1917-2002**

The autism world has lost a great friend and superb human being with the death, from a massive stroke, of Doctor "Billy" Crook on Sept. 20, 2002.

Dr. Crook became interested in autism while being trained as a pediatrician at Johns Hopkins Medical School in the 1940s, where Leo Kanner was Director of Child Psychiatry. Dr. Crook's longstanding interest in the medical roots of autism, ADHD and other behavioral problems led him to pioneer the investigation of allergies, food intolerances and yeast infections long before most pediatricians were aware of such problems.

He was the author of 15 books, including *Help for Your Hyperactive Child*, *The Yeast Connection*, and *Solving the Puzzle of Your Hard-To-Raise Child*.

Dr. Crook was one of the 27 cutting-edge physicians and scientists ARI invited to the first organizational meeting of the Defeat Autism Now! (DAN!) Project in January, 1995.

He will be missed.

—BR