

**Editor's Notebook: Bernard Rimland, Ph.D.****The 14th DAN! Conference: A historical event**

No doubt about it! The 14<sup>th</sup> Defeat Autism Now! (DAN!) Conference held in Los Angeles October 1-3 was the best ever. The large enthusiastic crowds, the many standing ovations, and the superlatives on the attendee evaluation forms all told the same story—a truly great conference—the best yet!

The highlight of the conference was the eagerly-anticipated, standing-room-only Sunday morning session at which stage and screen star Lou Diamond Phillips did a superb job of introducing, to the audience and to the media, for the first time ever, a group of recovered autistic children. There were many heart-warming and humorous moments. ("Hunter, what is the name of your soccer team?" "Gannon Plumbing.")

Although the public announcement listed October 1-3 as the Conference days, the scheduled events actually covered September 29 through October 4. A Think Tank of scientists and physicians involved in mercury detoxification—an extremely important treatment modality—took place on September 29 and 30. Thursday evening, September 30, was devoted to three pre-conference workshops: "Healthier Babies" (Nancy O'Hara, M.D. and Stuart Freedendfeld, M.D.); "Bio-science Behind DAN!" (Lauren Underwood, Ph.D.); and "Mercury and Autism" (Lyn Redwood, R.N.). Monday, October 4 was devoted to DAN! training sessions for MDs and RNs. Both classes were sold out.

As ARI readers are well aware, mercury toxicity, especially the mercury in vaccines, is a major issue in autism. Of the 77 biomedical interventions rated for efficacy by parents (see [www.AutismResearchInstitute.com](http://www.AutismResearchInstitute.com), select Parent Ratings of Treatments), mercury detoxification received a higher rating than any drug, supplement, or special diet. Mercury detoxification was rated helpful by 73% of parents, with the gluten/casein-free diet coming in second at 63%.

The preconference Think Tank was focused largely at updating ARI's May 2001 Mercury Detoxification Consensus Report, posted on the ARI website. The 2004 Think-Tankers agreed, as had the 2001 group, that DMPS is a more effective detoxifying (chelating) agent than DMSA, but DMPS lacks FDA approval, so physicians using it risk penalties and sanctions. The group agreed it would be desirable to initiate the lengthy and expensive task of obtaining FDA approval for DMPS use in autism. ARI will do what it can to help fund and facilitate this project. An updated Mercury Detoxification Report should be completed and posted on our website by December 2004.

A number of conference speakers ad-

ressed various other aspects of the mercury/autism problem. The evidence is overwhelming, and continues to grow, that thimerosal-containing vaccines are a major cause of the world-wide autism epidemic. Father-and-son team Mark and David Geier provided compelling evidence for the role of thimerosal (mercury)-containing vaccines in causing autism and other neurodevelopmental disor-

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ders in children. The Geiers have used the Freedom of Information Act to discover major evidence of serious cover-up attempts by government agencies.

Although the toxicity of mercury has been recognized for centuries, the specific biochemistry of mercury toxicity has been unclear until very recently. The research of Richard Deth, Boyd Haley, Jill James and several other presenters at our conference has pinpointed the biochemical pathways in which mercury damage is implicated, and thus clarified the measures required for remediation. Much of this breakthrough-level research has been funded by the Autism Research Institute.

Another major topic addressed by several conference speakers is the role of special diets in the treatment of autism. Digestive problems, many of which are the result of heavy-metal toxicity, are very common in autistic children. Lisa Lewis, Ph.D., provided a very informative update on the gluten-free, casein-free (GF/CF) diet, about which she has written extensively.

A major development in the treatment of autism is the Specific Carbohydrate Diet (SCD) which was discussed by the SCD's major pioneer and advocate, Elaine Gottschall. The SCD is designed to provide the patient with adequate nourishment while carefully avoiding foods which foster the growth of intestinal microbes which produce toxins that cause or aggravate the symptoms of autism. Pediatrician Sid Baker, who along with Jon Pangborn and me founded the DAN! Project in 1995, has become a strong advocate of the SCD diet. His talk included presentations by three very savvy and experienced mothers whose children had remained severely autistic despite the best efforts of the best doctors. Only the SCD diet made a difference, and in each case the difference was huge. Elaine Gottschall's book *Breaking the Vicious Cycle* is now available from ARI. See insert this issue,

or [www.AutismResearchInstitute.com](http://www.AutismResearchInstitute.com), select publication list. SCD information may be found at [www.pecanbread.com](http://www.pecanbread.com).

The remarkable effectiveness of injected methylcobalamin, a form of vitamin B12, was discussed by Jim Neubrandner, M.D.

Gastroenterologists Andrew Wakefield, M.D., Arthur Krigsman, M.D., and Sophie Rosseneu, M.D. provided interesting and informative lectures on the nature and treatment of the gastrointestinal problems which are a very common feature of the regressive form of autism. Regressive, or late onset, autism constitutes the majority of cases in the world-wide autism epidemic.

Jane El-Dahr, M.D., and Aristo Vojdani, Ph.D., discussed new findings and new treatments, addressing the role of the immune system in autism.

A number of speakers provided valuable insights on the specific measures needed to bring about significant improvement in autistic children, using the DAN! approach. These included Sid Baker, M.D., Anju Usman, M.D., Andrew Levinson, M.D., Lynn Hamilton, Jerry Kartzinell, M.D., Jacquelyn McCandless, M.D., Ken Bock, M.D., Jeff Bradstreet, M.D. and a parent panel titled "Successfully Treating Autism" moderated by Stephen M. Edelson, Ph.D. and me.

Paul Hardy, M.D., addressed the emerging field of nutraceuticals—the use of plants and nutrients extracted from plants—in the treatment of autism.

Martha Herbert, M.D., Ph.D., spoke about recent developments in brain research as it pertains to autism, and Marvin Boris, M.D. and Alan Goldblatt, P.A.C. presented their findings on newly emerging information about the role of genetics in the causation of autism.

Doreen Granpeesheh, Ph.D. discussed her work at the Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD) and offered valuable advice for the parents of newly diagnosed children. CARD is the only ABA organization that endorses and practices the biomedical interventions associated with autism. She provided a number of case study demonstrations of the efficacy of the combined DAN! and ABA approaches.

Those who were unable to attend the conference may still benefit from the vast amount of information presented. The conference was videotaped and audiotaped, and copies of the conference syllabus are available. For the first time, we will be broadcasting highlights of the conference on the Internet. See the insert in this issue or visit [www.ARIWebConference.com](http://www.ARIWebConference.com) for further information. Also, see the insert in this issue for information about purchasing tapes, DVDs and printed materials.