

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

With great interest, I read your article about Dr. Fudenberg (ARRI 3/4). However, I am a little surprised about your criticism of the actions by the FDA and MUSC but applauding of the actions by Dr. Fudenberg's patients and Judge Blatto...

As you know it is a great honor for an institution to have its faculty discover a treatment for autism and other neurological disorders. If Dr. Fudenberg's treatment is working so miraculously, as he claims, then why are not MUSC and the FDA helping him? After all, our federal government through NIH programs spends megabucks each year in the hope of finding new treatments and cures for all sorts of health problems, and I for one do not believe that the FDA and MUSC have ill intentions in this respect...

Is it possible that there are some other problems with Dr. Fudenberg's work, e.g., there are no control studies, what's the nature of improvement, who does the evaluation of patients, why this earth-shaking discovery is not published in a peer-reviewed journal...?...

I think the FDA and MUSC are only trying to inform the public of bad science when they are monitoring his activities. In our society, we all have the hasty nature of finding fault with governmental agencies like the FDA and institutions like MUSC. However, in your story of Fudenberg's treatment, we must first find the scientific merit, worth and validity of his treatment before its approval for any further continuation. It should also be mentioned that Stubbs and co-workers (1980), having tried transfer factor therapy in an autistic child, concluded that they would not recommend this particular treatment for autistic children since there was no impact on the autistic traits in their patient.

Vijendra K. Singh, Ph.D.
Logan, Utah

Editor's Note:

I am in partial agreement with some of the positions you take, but certainly not all of them. For one thing, my positive assessment of Fudenberg's work was not based on his statements, but on the observations of others—both parents and professionals—who have seen his research results first-hand. For another, there has been more than one instance of an effective and pioneering treatment being stifled by university conservatism or by governmental bureaucracy.

Regarding your complaint that Fudenberg's research has not been published in peer-reviewed journals, he does not use proper controls, etc.: allowing him to continue his work rather than shutting it off would permit him to collect enough data to test his ideas objectively and to

prepare such publications. The fact that Dr. Stubbs found negative results using transfer factor therapy with only one autistic child does not convince me that the approach should be abandoned.

My editorial was not so much a defense of Dr. Fudenberg, as a defense of freedom of scientific inquiry. When participants are acquainted with any risks entailed, and wish to proceed, I believe they have the right to do so. Being free entails some risks, but I am much more willing to take those risks than I am to endure the opposite.

To the Editor:

Your abstract of "Diet therapies show promise," ARRI 4/1, was excellent!

I note that you use quotes around "purine" autism—from a diagnostic point of view, it is as well established as PKU autism, fragile X autism, etc. It may turn out to be the single largest group (or one of the largest) of patients with autism of metabolic etiology since we have already identified three separate enzyme defects in purine autistics. In most of the purine autistics we have not yet found the defect, so there may be quite a number of them.

When I wrote the *Clinical Nutrition* paper, I knew the statistics for our 1974 study (22%) and the French study (29%). Just last month, I was sent data showing that the figure of hyperuriscouria in Italian autistics is 27%.

Mary Coleman, M.D.

Bettelheim dead at 86

(continued)

(non-autistic) students at the Orthogenic School claiming that students at the school were routinely verbally and physically abused by Bettelheim himself—and that contrary to Bettelheim's claims, they had seen no positive changes in the autistic students who attended the school. The students claimed that Bettelheim frequently beat them or pulled their hair, threatened to send them to the "asylum" if they questioned his rules, censored their mail and confiscated their diaries. One wrote, "the horror stories of what he did to us are far greater than anyone can put down on paper."

The students' charges were denied by a former counselor at the school, who claimed that the students were simply expressing fantasies.

LETTERS

Letters to the editor are welcome. Letters intended for publication must be signed and should not exceed one page in length, including references. Letters may be edited without consulting the authors. Please do not submit letters which have already been submitted to other publications. News and notices are also welcome; please send notices well in advance of events.

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