

Thalidomide, autism findings

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of the function of those cells, but may also eliminate the landmarks other cells need to make their connections. If this is true, then some cells that are perfectly healthy may end up with the wrong connections. This might explain some of the strange sensory problems that so many parents, therapists, and people with autism themselves describe: crossed wires in the brain." In rats whose brain stems are damaged before the cerebellum develops, they say, abnormalities in cerebellar development later occur.

Rodier et al. conclude that brain stem defects are the most logical explanation for many autistic symptoms. "Eye motility abnormalities, hyper-acute hearing, lack of facial expression, unusual sensitivities to food taste and texture, hypersensitivity to touch, oddities of gait, hearing deficits and synesthesias (sensory crossings-over, such as a sound being perceived as a color)—all have been cited as characteristics more common in autistic than in non-autistic populations," they say. "While each of these symptoms could be effected by damage to several different levels of the nervous system... the simplest explanation is that they result from an injury to the brain stem."

Editor's note: Since I am far too modest to quote myself, permit me to quote from a review of my book, *Infantile Autism* (1964): "Part II [of Rimland's book] is a daring and highly speculative theory of autism that suggests the brain stem reticular formation [is the site of autism]."

"Linking etiologies in humans and animal models: studies of autism," Patricia M. Rodier, Jennifer L. Ingram, Barbara Tisdale, and Victoria J. Croog; *Reproductive Toxicology*, Vol. 11, Nos. 2/3, 1997, pp. 417-422. Address: Patricia M. Rodier, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, University of Rochester Medical Center, Box 668, 601 Elmwood Avenue, Rochester, NY 14642.

—and—

"An embryological approach to autism: the thalidomide connection," Patricia M. Rodier with Catherine Johnson; NAARRATIVE (Newsletter of the National Alliance for Autism Research), No. 1, Summer 1997.

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*Alston Quillin, M.D.,
on the second DAN! Conference*

IN MEMORIAM

DR. FRANZ SCHMID DR. ANDREAS RETT

The first half of 1997 marked the passing of two great European physicians who have made major contributions to the field of developmental disabilities.

DR. FRANZ SCHMID (1921-1997) died on January 5th at the age of 76. Dr. Schmid was a prolific writer and researcher. He authored over 900 publications, including 45 books. His *Pediatric Encyclopedia* alone consisted of 13,429 pages. Among his major accomplishments was the development of improved means of utilizing cell therapy to improve the lives of children with Down Syndrome, autism, and many other disabling conditions. Much of his time was spent traveling the world, seeing patients at clinics set up in various countries by his admirers and disciples. His work is being carried on in the U.S. by the New Hope Foundation, 1945 Pine View Avenue, Virginia Beach, VA 23956, phone 757-427-5552, fax 757-427-3007.

DR. ANDREAS RETT (1924-1997) died on April 25, at age 73. Dr. Rett, like Dr. Schmid, dedicated his life to helping mentally disabled children. Dr. Rett's identification, in 1966, of the syndrome that bears his name came about because "the startling identity of behaviors of two girls sitting next to each other in our waiting room led us to suspect a common ailment." The term "Rett syndrome" became a formal diagnosis in 1972. (Symptoms of Rett syndrome, which primarily affects girls, include a chronic "hand-washing", hand-wringing or hand-clapping motion, hyperventilation or breath-holding, air swallowing, tooth-grinding, laughing and screaming spells, small, cold, blue feet, curvature of the spine, and progressive loss of mobility). Prior to the establishment of Rett syndrome, Rett has said, "the diagnosis was autism, but it was wrong." (Information on Rett syndrome is available from the Rett Syndrome Association, phone 301-856-3334, fax 301-856-3336.)