

# Autism Research Review

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

A quarterly publication of the Autism Research Institute

Reviewing biomedical and educational research in the field of autism and related disorders

## Your help is needed!

As you have read in the many media reports of the so-called "Autism Summit" (a meeting in Washington, D.C. in late November), the federal government and several multi-million-dollar autism groups hope to be "finding effective drugs for the symptoms of autism" in 7 to 10 years.

**NONSENSE!** We need to tell them, and the media, and tens of thousands of families of autistic children, that many effective treatments are available NOW. If your child has recovered from autism, or improved dramatically, and you would be willing to speak to the media about your child's recovery, your help is needed! The Autism Research Institute has begun compiling an extensive list of families throughout the United States who are willing to talk to the media about their child's recovery. Our press release announcing our "Autism IS Treatable" campaign will go out in early 2004 to the major media (the national television networks, the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, etc.) as well as to many hundreds of local TV stations and local newspapers. We hope to be able to give local reporters (as well as national reporters) the names and phone numbers of families—and professionals—who are willing to be interviewed for television, newspaper and magazine reports.

We must get the word out in order to help the thousands of autistic children who are now being treated with toxic drugs like Ritalin and Risperidal. If your child has recovered or improved markedly, and you're willing to help, please provide us with your name and contact information. Write to ARI, fax to (619) 563-6840, or sign up at [www.AutismIsTreatable.com](http://www.AutismIsTreatable.com). Your identity will be protected. Only media people seeking families in your locality will be advised to contact you. In the world of autism, parents make a difference! Please help.

Also, if you are planning a fund-raiser, such as a run or walk, remember that only ARI funds "Research That Makes a Difference." With your help, we can make 2004 the turning point in the war against autism.

Bernard Rimland, Ph.D.

## Wakefield group: more evidence links MMR, autism

A new study by Andrew Wakefield and colleagues further implicates the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine as a factor in the current epidemic of autism. Wakefield is the pioneering physician who first identified a unique form of intestinal inflammation which occurs in many autistic children and which appears to be linked to MMR vaccination (see ARRI 16/2, 16/1).

In the new study, the researchers compared 52 children with regressive autism and bowel problems to 25 healthy controls and 54 non-autistic children suffering from bowel inflammation. They report that autistic subjects exhibited widespread inflammation in their intestines, with populations of several types of lymphocytes (white blood cells that fight infection) "significantly increased in affected children compared with developmentally normal non-inflamed control groups [and] reaching levels similar to inflamed controls." In addition, two types of immune system cells were significantly increased in the autistic group compared with both healthy controls and non-autistic children with inflammatory bowel disorders.

The researchers also report finding high levels of eosinophils (white blood cells that often increase in number as a result of an allergic reaction) in the autistic children. Those who were on gluten- and casein-free diets had lower eosinophil levels, even though their lymphocyte counts were similar to those of the other autistic children.

Wakefield says, "This paper not only confirms the presence of disease distinct from

other inflammatory bowel diseases in these children but the findings are also consistent with a viral cause." While the researchers did not look specifically for measles virus, previous studies have revealed the measles virus in the bowel tissue of autistic children.

"What we saw," Wakefield says, "was a response not dissimilar to that seen in some patients with HIV. Clearly these children don't have AIDS but the response fits the pathology consistent with chronic viral disease."

"Intestinal lymphocyte populations in children with regressive autism: evidence for extensive mucosal immunopathology," Paul Ashwood, Simon H. Murch, Andrew Anthony, Alicia A. Pellicer, Franco Torrente, Michael A. Thomson, John A. Walker-Smith, and Andrew J. Wakefield, *Journal of Clinical Immunology*, Vol. 23, No. 6, November 2003, 504-17. Address: Paul Ashwood, Inflammatory Bowel Disease Study Group, Royal Free and University College Medical School, London, UK, [p.ashwood@rfc.ucl.ac.uk](mailto:p.ashwood@rfc.ucl.ac.uk).

—and—

"Bowel virus found in autistic children who had MMR jab," Beezy Marsh, *Daily Mail* [UK], January 13, 2004.

## Animal study reveals toxic effects of thimerosal

More evidence of thimerosal's damaging effects on the young brain come from a new Japanese study of rats which reveals "cytotoxic actions on cerebellar granule neurons" by the vaccine preservative. The study also concludes that the potency of ethylmercury (the form of mercury contained in thimerosal) is "almost similar to that of methylmercury," a form of mercury already well established to be highly toxic.

The new research adds to data linking high levels of thimerosal exposure to an increased risk of autism (see ARRI 17/2 and story on page 2 of this issue).

"Effect of thimerosal, a preservative in vaccines, on intracellular Ca(2+) concentration of rat cerebellar neurons," T. Ueha-Ishibashi, Y. Oyama, H. Nakao, C. Umebayashi, Y. Nishizaki, T. Tatsuishi, K. Iwase, K. Murao, and H. Seo, *Toxicology*, Vol. 195, No. 1, January 15, 2004, 77-84.

## Rep. Weldon blasts new vaccine study; researcher labels it "intentional fraud"

A new study on vaccines is creating a firestorm of controversy, ranging from Congressional criticism to a charge by a noted researcher that the paper is dishonest.

The retrospective study of more than 140,000 children by Thomas Verstraeten and colleagues concluded that pediatric vaccines containing thimerosal, a preservative that is nearly 50 percent mercury, do not signifi-

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