

FEATURES, SPECIAL REPORT SUBARTICLE

# 2020: The year in quotes

BY SPECTRUM

23 DECEMBER 2020

“You eat angel-food cake with blue dye in it, after a fast, and then measure the time until the blue poop arrives.”

**Julia Dallman**, University of Miami, on her team’s **use of ‘Smurf cakes’** to track digestion in children with SYNGAP1 mutations.

“The ‘pig in the python’ is headed our way, with the aging population and recognition of higher prevalence of autism than was once thought.”

**Joseph Piven**, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, on the anticipated **surge in older autistic adults** as the Baby Boomer generation approaches age 65.

“I’m doing a shoutout to Black researchers: Please help us. It’s very hard for Blacks in any profession; it is a fight to get to the top. But this needs to be built by us and for us.”

**Kim Kaiser**, The Color of Autism Foundation, on the need to **include more Black people** in autism research — both as participants and as scientists.

“When you start to just use ‘magic’ instead of science, you stop searching for the truth.”

**Kevin Ayres**, University of Georgia, on the **lack of evidence** to support the ‘rapid prompting method’ of communication.

“This experience, being sheltered at home and moving some therapies to being done remotely, is going to be transformative.”

**Antonio Hardan**, Stanford University, on using **lessons learned from lockdown** to improve remote treatment for autism.

“You can’t just sit down and talk with a baby and figure out if they have autism.”

**Katarzyna Chawarska**, Yale University, on the challenge of **diagnosing infants** with autism.

“Null findings are as important and thought-provoking as seemingly significant findings that rock the world.”

**Ralph-Axel Müller**, San Diego State University, on the importance of **results that contradict** previous findings.

“It’s a bad situation, but it may be leading to a revolution in how we really do science

sharing and conferences in all fields.”

**Peter Mundy**, president of the International Society for Autism Research, on how the coronavirus pandemic forced INSAR to **go virtual this year** — and inspired organizers to rethink how the conference might be held in years to come.

“Collaborating is a risk, but one that’s worth taking.”

**Mayada Elsabbagh**, McGill University, on the **value of team efforts** in autism research.

“It’s important to do experiments, but it’s at least as important to stop and pause and reflect and analyze, and think about what those experiments mean.”

**Sam Wang**, Princeton University, on making good use of time **away from the lab** during the coronavirus lockdown.