

LEGACY SPECIAL REPORTS

Special report: The new history of autism

BY SPECTRUM

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The history of science has long overlooked contributions from underrepresented groups — and the history of autism research is no exception. For 40 years, virtually every story about the field's origins has starred Leo Kanner and Hans Asperger, who are credited with writing, in 1943 and 1944, respectively, the earliest accounts of autism as a distinct diagnosis.

More recently, however, historians have begun to excavate the work of several women and Jewish clinicians that enabled, and in at least one case, predated, Kanner and Asperger's famous descriptions. In "The new history of autism" — broken into three parts here and published sequentially on Monday, Wednesday and Friday this week — journalist **David Dobbs** tells the stories of these forgotten scientists in detail.

Spectrum's enterprise editor, **Brady Huggett**, talked to Dobbs about his research, and a recording of that interview appears on Tuesday. A photo gallery in this special report also reveals rare images of Grunya Sukhareva, a central character in Dobbs' story, that were discovered in 2020 at a center named after her in Moscow, Russia.

Other articles from our own archives explore the prescient accuracy of **Sukhareva's 1925 description** of autism, as well as **Kanner's seminal paper** and **Asperger's Nazi ties**.

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