

SPECIAL REPORT SUBARTICLE

Most-viewed articles of 2011

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In 2011, we published just under 500 articles, on topics ranging from complex **neuroimaging techniques** to the interest some children with autism **show in comic books**.

We tackled these topics in all different formats: full-length news reports with quotes from experts to add context, brief research highlights and provocative, playful blog posts. Likewise, some of them perfectly capture our aim to help advance autism research, and others became surprise hits, bringing new and unexpected readers to our site.

Here is a brief list of some of the most-viewed articles on the site over the year:

1) **People with milder forms of autism struggle as adults**

The online version of an article published in *The New York Times*, about a **high school student with autism** who struggles to find employment, linked to this piece on our website. Overnight, our article, which describes how even so-called high-functioning adults with autism struggle to fit into society, gained thousands of new readers.

2) **An ape with 'autism'**

In April, we ran a heartwarming blog post about a young ape named Teco, whose unusual behavior resembles that of people with autism. The blog went 'viral,' as they say, and the article and Teco both became wildly popular.



3) Researchers identify drug candidate for Angelman syndrome

Contrary to the adage that bad news makes the best news, this preliminary report about a promising drug candidate for **Angelman syndrome** moved quickly to the top. We covered this first as an unpublished report from the **2011 Society for Neuroscience annual meeting**, but the **Nature publication** followed soon after.

4) Studies implicate gut bacteria in autism

Gut problems are not among the core symptoms of autism, but many people say they have a huge impact on the lives of people with autism. There is little rigorous research on this topic, however. This article, which showed that gut bacteria can alter mouse behavior, was a rare addition to the field and our readers clearly thought so too.

5) **Machine-learning tool offers rapid autism diagnosis**

Autism diagnosis often requires hours of detailed analysis by trained professionals. Doctors, researchers and parents are all eager for diagnostic scans that are quick and easily accessible to remote populations. In October, we described preliminary results from a five-minute online questionnaire. The article generated a vigorous discussion among several researchers, including Dennis Wall, who designed the rapid screen, and **Cathy Lord**, who developed the clinical diagnostic standard.

6) **Why fold Asperger syndrome into autism spectrum disorder in the DSM-5?**

When the committee tasked with revising the diagnostic manual for psychiatric disorders first announced that **Asperger syndrome** would be subsumed into a larger autism diagnosis in the next edition of the manual, there were immediate protests. In this Viewpoint, one of the members of the committee explains the scientific rationale for the change.



7) Motor problems in autism move into research focus

Motor problems, such as clumsiness or abnormal gait, are present in as many as 80 percent of children with autism. Still, as this article reports, the topic is just beginning to get the attention it deserves from researchers.

8) Researchers track down autism rates across the globe

Often-cited statistics say that, in the U.S. and the U.K., as many as 1 in 100 children have autism. But there are few studies reporting **prevalence** in other countries. This article describes the myriad issues that make autism diagnosis, and studies trying to assess its prevalence, so complicated.

9) Diagnostic tests for autism may miss many girls

Autism may be four times more common in boys than in girls, but, as this story describes, the symptoms of autism are different enough in girls that many of them go undiagnosed. Girls are also often **excluded from scientific studies**, compounding the lack of understanding about the nature of their disorder.

10) Diagnostic brain scans: hope or hype?

For months, we noticed headlines trumpeting the results of this or that brain scan that promised to diagnose autism in minutes. After one more such study debuted in May, we took a deeper look, found that brain scans are nowhere near ready for the clinic, and generated much discussion through comments on the article.