

NEWS

Community Newsletter: Autism impact factors, autistic people's perspectives, oxytocin receptor

BY MICHAEL FERGENSON

10 JULY 2022

Welcome to this week's Community Newsletter. I'm your new host, Michael Fergenson, *Spectrum's* engagement editor.

This week on Twitter, autism researchers debated the merits of journal impact factors, a measure that reflects how often a publication's articles get cited.

Noah Sasson, professor of psychology at the University of Texas at Dallas, sparked much of the discussion with a tweet highlighting **new impact factors** for several autism research journals, sending kudos to the journal ***Autism*** and its outgoing editor-in-chief, **David Mandell**, "for being the new champ!"

New Impact Factors for autism research journals. Last year's in parentheses

Autism 6.68 (5.69)

Molecular Autism 6.48 (7.51)

Autism Research 4.63 (5.22)

JADD 4.35 (4.29)

Journal of Neurodevelopmental Disorders 4.07 (4.21)

Research in ASD 3.29 (2.88)

Research in DD 3.00 (3.23)

— Noah Sasson (@Noahsasson) **June 30, 2022**

In response, some opined that using journal impact factors as a tool for research assessment is a losing game. “Impact factors for research journals should **represent the *actual* *measurable* *impact*** of the research on the target populations, not how many times the researchers cited one another and themselves,” replied Twitter user **Dr Petrichor**, whose username is perhaps a reference to Doctor Who.

Kinda obvious, but

Impact factors for research journals should represent the ***actual* *measurable* *impact*** of the research on the target populations, not how many times the researchers cited one another and themselves. **#impact #research #academia #ImpactFactor #AcademicTwitter** <https://t.co/cZUxZhS92f>

— Dr Petrichor ?? (@DocPetrichor) **July 1, 2022**

Autism’s incoming editor-in-chief **Sue Fletcher-Watson**, professor of developmental psychology at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, countered in a quote tweet that even though **“impact factors are a crock of the proverbial**. . . this happens because folk are submitting their best work to us (thank you!) + reviewers & editors are honing it to its best self. That work gets highly cited & I’m hoping that means it’s changing minds and practices too.”

Look, impact factors are a crock of the proverbial

But this happens because folk are submitting their best work to us (thank you!) + reviewers & editors are honing it to its best self.

That work gets highly cited & I’m hoping that means it’s changing minds and practices too. <https://t.co/PkS1uxTRLK>

— Sue Fletcher-Watson (@SueReviews) **June 30, 2022**

Beth Wiggan, who also goes by **Beth Hardie** and is managing editor of the *European Journal of Criminology* and a visiting scholar at the University of Cambridge in the U.K., tweeted in agreement

that impact factors are a crock, “but I also know that lots of my hardest & best work for our journal does sometimes end up reflected in an increase in IF. So **congratulations on a brilliant journal** and take a pat on the back for the hard work involved.”

As an editor (different field) I agree that they are a crock, but I also know that lots of my hardest & best work for our journal does sometimes end up reflected in an increase in IF. So congratulations on a brilliant journal and take a pat on the back for the hard work involved.

— Beth Wiggan (@beth_wiggan) **July 1, 2022**

Others took a less sanguine view of the notorious impact factor. “Don’t do this. This tweet, and others like it, **help break autism research**,” tweeted **Lorcan Kenny**, national research lead for autism at the National Health Service in England, in response to a tweet from the journal *Autism* touting its new impact factor. Kenny went on to ask readers to consider signing the **Declaration on Research Assessment**, which claims that “that the Journal Impact Factor has a number of well-documented deficiencies as a tool for research assessment” and seeks to assure “that scientific output is measured accurately and evaluated wisely.

Don't do this. This tweet, and others like it, help break autism research. Consider signing **@DORAssessment** instead - <https://t.co/Pj008axqrB> <https://t.co/Ubpl38Hh8G>

— Lorcan Kenny (@LorcanKenny) **July 5, 2022**

Should autism researchers make a pact to move away from journal impact factors? Let us know what you think in the comments!

A different tweet from a journal — in this case, ***Autism in Adulthood*** — also caught many eyes on Twitter. It highlighted a **guest editorial by the Global Autistic Task Force on Autism Research**, a group of autistic researchers, professionals and representatives of organizations for autistic people. The editorial says that the *Lancet* Commission’s 2021 report, which issued **recommendations for the autism field**, “falls short of truly including autistic perspectives,” and that “autistic people must be involved in setting the research agenda and have decision-making power in autism research, and not be merely tokenized.”

Autistic Perspectives on the Future of Clinical Autism Research. Guest editorial responds to Lancet Commission: "Autistic people Autistic people .. must have decision-making power in autism research, & not be merely tokenized"

FREE:<https://t.co/UMS1mBHDXF> pic.twitter.com/OxUQbf6d0Y

— AutismInAdulthood (@AutismAdulthood) **June 22, 2022**

"Must-read for autism researchers," tweeted **Ilse Noens**, professor of parenting and special education at KU Leuven in Belgium. "Decision-making power for autistic people in research ... exactly what we try to do with the Academic Collaborative Centre for Autism in Flanders, Belgium."

Must-read for autism researchers. Decision-making power for autistic people in research ... exactly what we try to do with the Academic Collaborative Centre for Autism in Flanders, Belgium [@awautisme](https://twitter.com/awautisme) - English version will follow soon. <https://t.co/AAGqdH2At3>

— Ilse Noens (@IlseNoens) **June 23, 2022**

"Wish I would have kept the names of those folks **publishing on autism** while calling autistic kids 'cases' so I could tag them in this," tweeted **Brandi Wren**, a research affiliate in anthropology at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana.

Wish I would have kept the names of those folks publishing on autism while calling autistic kids "cases" so I could tag them in this. <https://t.co/tgMS2PpBhf>

— Tiny bag of beans, PhD???? (@bthewren) **June 22, 2022**

"Autistic power IS decision-making freed from personal interest, objective & essential, not suborned to vested interest of any kind; scary stuff, no wonder it is denied!" tweeted Twitter user Una Sheehan, also in response.

Autistic power IS decision-making freed from personal interest, objective & essential, not suborned to vested interest of any kind; scary stuff, no wonder it is denied!

— Una Sheehan (@UnaSheehan12) **June 23, 2022**

Larry Young, director of the Center for Translational Social Neuroscience and the Silvio O. Conte Center for Oxytocin and Social Cognition at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, **took to Twitter** this week to share his lab's new **study** that mapped the expression of receptors for the social hormone oxytocin across the prairie vole brain, providing "evidence of presynaptic function" for the receptors.

Excited to share our detailed RNAscope mapping of oxytocin receptor in vole brain, relation to DA receptors, SNPs & mRNA-protein mismatch. Evidence of presynaptic function! Great teamwork by Kiyoshi Inoue, **@Charles53738010** & **@KengoHorie!**
<https://t.co/mTakAUMB3B>

— Larry Young (@lyoun03) **June 28, 2022**

"This paper is just a marvel," tweeted **Patricia Churchland**, emeritus professor of philosophy at the University of California, San Diego, **adding** that oxytocin "looks much more widespread than I had realized. Awesome!"

This paper is just a marvel -- OXT looks much more widespread than I had realized. Awesome!

— Patricia Churchland (@patchurchland) **June 29, 2022**

And unlike mice, prairie voles **express the receptors** in both types of dopamine neurons (D1 and D2) in the nucleus accumbens, tweeted **Brian Trainor**, professor and vice chair of psychology at the University of California, Davis. "Mice are great but we need other species too!"

Unlike mice, in the nucleus accumbens prairie voles have Oxt expression in both D1 AND D2 neurons. Mice are great but we need to study other species too!

<https://t.co/4PQ9EaPO01>

— Brian Trainor (@trainorlab) **June 29, 2022**

That's it for this week's Community Newsletter! If you have any suggestions for interesting social posts you saw in the autism research sphere, feel free to send an email to michael@spectrumnews.org.

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