

NEWS

Community Newsletter: Autistic health-care needs, questioning brain-to-brain synchrony

BY SPECTRUM

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Tweets in the autism research sphere during the first week of March have come in like a lion, roaring — over gaps in clinical care for autistic people, gaps in understanding and gaps in evidence.

Mary Doherty, founder of Autistic Doctors International and a consultant anesthetist at Our Lady's Hospital in Navan, Ireland, tweeted about a new paper in which she and her colleagues surveyed autistic people about their **access to medical care**. The majority reported difficulty seeing a general practitioner and having an untreated mental health condition; about a third reported having an untreated potentially life-threatening condition.

<https://twitter.com/AutisticDoctor/status/1496597771696193538>

"Adjustments for autism-specific needs are as necessary as ramps for wheelchair users," the abstract concludes. In a separate tweet of Altmeter scores, which track mentions of a paper across the web, Doherty noted that it was good to see the paper was drawing attention and putting a spotlight on autistic health care.

<https://twitter.com/AutisticDoctor/status/1498942722035654656>

"There are some heartbreaking findings, but it should be a wake-up call for health services as to how they aren't caring for autistic patients," **Felicity Sedgewick**, lecturer in psychology of education at Bristol University in the United Kingdom, wrote in a quote tweet.

Steven Kapp, an autistic lecturer in psychology at the University of Portsmouth in the U.K., tweeted about a **free online conference** on the condition's **double empathy problem**, scheduled for 17 March.

<https://twitter.com/drstevenkapp/status/1498684935833591813>

For anyone unable to attend, it will be recorded, tweeted co-host **Emine Gurbuz**, also a lecturer in psychology at the University of Portsmouth.

https://twitter.com/e_mine_gurbuz/status/1498694470199611394

The double empathy gap may lead to a lack of connection, but some research suggests that social engagement prompts people's brains to synchronize. Science writer **Rolf Degen** tweeted that science and the media have likely **overhyped the idea of 'interbrain synchrony,'** commenting on a new paper about HyPyp, a hyperscanning python pipeline developed to analyze the phenomenon.

<https://twitter.com/DegenRolf/status/1498180715871191043>

Guillaume Dumas, assistant professor of computational psychiatry at the Université de Montréal in Canada, cautioned that it may be too soon to “throw the baby [out] with the bathwater.”

Baruch Eitam, associate professor of psychology at the University of Haifa in Israel, commented that the literature around studying brain patterns across participants has “many aspects of what [statistician] **Andrew Gelman** would call ‘dead on arrival.’”

A skeptical **Geoff Bird**, professor of cognitive neuroscience at the University of Oxford in the U.K., chimed in, “I guess you give it the benefit of the doubt in case you can be convinced though.”

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 news@spectrumnews.org.

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