

NEWS

Community Newsletter: Families in crisis; genetics mystery; health determinants

BY MICHAEL FERGENSON

30 OCTOBER 2022

“We are in a crisis. People are waiting years to get the #autism services they need. Families are suffering,” tweeted **Sarabeth Broder-Fingert**, associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School in Worcester, this week.

The issue, she explains in an *Autism Research* **commentary**, is that “long wait lists for diagnostic evaluations and limited specialty workforce have created substantial delays.” As a solution, she proposes an approach in which pediatric primary care physicians “can rule in or rule out autism in children, for whom diagnosis is clear, and refer more complex cases for specialist evaluations.”

Thank you for this! Wondering about including PNPs, Psych Mental Health NPs and some of the work <https://t.co/ZdmHiNR5ov> has been doing with Welcome Visits. Similar to your writing, how can we use the workforce we have to get kids what they needs quickly.
pic.twitter.com/UcdPjNQGKx

— Ashley Darcy-Mahoney (@ADarcyMahoney) **October 18, 2022**

To get children access to the services they need quickly, **Ashley Darcy-Mahoney**, director of infant research at the George Washington University’s Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders Institute in Washington, D.C., proposed also “including PNPs, Psych Mental Health NPs and some of the work **Corticacare.com** has been doing with **Welcome Visits.**”

Helen Tager-Flusberg, director of Boston University’s Center for Autism Research Excellence, tweeted that it is “so important to **change our system now** and prevent delays for future children

and families.”

Thank you Sarabeth and colleagues —so important to change our system now and prevent delays for future children and families... <https://t.co/qXdq9QphP4>

— Helen Tager-Flusberg (@HelenTager) **October 18, 2022**

This next thread sheds light on a mysterious genetic region linked to autism.

“Both common and rare genetic variants are relevant for autism. But are they **biologically convergent?**” **Dan Weiner**, a graduate student at Harvard University, asked in a thread describing his and his colleagues’ new **paper** in *Nature Genetics*, which *Spectrum* covered a preprint of in a previous **Community Newsletter**.

Both common and rare genetic variants are relevant for autism.

But are they biologically convergent?

Today in **@NatureGenet**, we share a new method + story of unexpected convergence at 16p, a region of long-standing mystery in autism research:<https://t.co/PngO34qYVy>

???? (1/14)

— Dan Weiner (@danweiner92) **October 24, 2022**

The team found that the short arm of chromosome 16 (which contains the region 16p11.2, home to several autism-linked copy number variations) harbors “the greatest excess of autism’s common polygenic influences.” The results tell a “story of unexpected convergence at 16p, a region of long-standing mystery in autism research,” according to Weiner.

Moving on to a study of different kinds of regions, **an analysis** in *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health* of school data from more than 7 million students investigated “the incidence of autism in England as a function of geography and sociodemographics.”

“New paper out! We analyse **social determinants of health** on #autism incidence,” tweeted study author **Andres Roman-Urrestarazu**, director of studies in psychology and behavioral science at the University of Cambridge in England. “We found odds of #autism diagnoses rise up to 1664% in England by ethnic, sex, and socioeconomic deprivation.”

New paper out! We analyse social determinants of health on **#autism** incidence. We found odds of **#autism** diagnoses rise up to 1664% in **#England** by ethnic, sex, and socioeconomic deprivation. **#OpenAccess** in **@LancetChildAdo!** **#MentalHealth**
<https://t.co/WQmU0szfcK>

— Andres Roman Urrestarazu (@a_romanu) **October 25, 2022**

“These findings are consistent with **earlier studies** in the US - see Peter Bearman’s CA studies,” tweeted Tager-Flusberg.

These findings are consistent with earlier studies in the US - see Peter Bearman’s CA studies <https://t.co/f0NBhlx3Ro>

— Helen Tager-Flusberg (@HelenTager) **October 25, 2022**

Highlighting one of the researchers’ images, **LSE Health Policy** tweeted, “The likelihood of receiving an **autism diagnosis** may depend on where you live.”

The likelihood of receiving an autism diagnosis may depend on where you live. **@robinvankessel** &co found odds of **#autism** diagnoses rise up to 1664% in England through **#ethnic**, sex, and **#socioeconomic** factors.

Check out their new ????in **@LancetChildAdo!**
??<https://t.co/AKOXFfxaa??> pic.twitter.com/MbQxt0sem9

— LSE Health Policy (@LSEHealthPolicy) **October 25, 2022**

Planning to attend **Neuroscience 2022**? Skipping this year? Interested in being featured in Spectrum's coverage? We want to hear from our community. Take this quick **survey** to let us know your plans!

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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