

NEWS

Community Newsletter: Organoid drug screens, intervention overreach, self-advocates' concerns

BY SPECTRUM

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It's a mixed bag of ICYMIIs from the autism research Twittersphere this week, ranging from separable cell clusters to research concerns of various kinds.

First we're highlighting a tweet about neural organoids, which hold promise for high-throughput drug screens. Growing enough of these cell clusters in suspension, however, presents a problem: They start to fuse together. A **new preprint** on bioRxiv offers a solution, tweeted lead researcher **Sergiu Pasca**, associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Stanford University in California.

By adding a cheap polymer to the mix, he and his team kept apart **more than 2,400 cortical organoids** in culture for screening hundreds of drugs approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, as well as agents that cause growth defects.

https://twitter.com/Sergiu_P_Pasca/status/1510062269543026690?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

"This sounds like a **very productive way** of growing organoids," tweeted **Luise Seeker**, a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland.

"**Game changer!**" wrote **Meng-meng Fu**, Stateman investigator at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke in Bethesda, Maryland.

https://twitter.com/Meng2Fu/status/1510243281820659713?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

The Autism Intervention Meta-Analysis, or **Project AIM** for short, has had some **unexpected fallout**, tweeted **Micheal Sandbank**, assistant professor of special education at the University of

Texas at Austin, who led the study. It's something that "keeps happening that I've been hesitant to address, but probably should," she wrote.

https://twitter.com/MichealSandbank/status/1511087636592668672?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

Many people, she says, have tried to paint the study's original findings as blanket endorsements for or against specific interventions — with some providers going so far as to feature photos of Sandbank on their sites.

https://twitter.com/MichealSandbank/status/1511087638584901646?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

But Project AIM, she notes, never set out to provide evidence to support or invalidate any particular intervention — and Sandbank says she is "not interested in carrying the flag for any specific cause (except maybe the cause to get authors to publish their raw means and SDs in every paper!)."

https://twitter.com/MichealSandbank/status/1511087645341982734?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

And for this **#AutismAcceptanceMonth**, the Autistic Self Advocacy Network **released a statement** on genetic research, which they **tweeted about** in a six-part thread.

https://twitter.com/autselfadvocacy/status/1510346342811508738?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

The concerns they raise — about eugenics and privacy issues, for example — echo those of self-advocates who **critiqued the Spectrum10K study** last year, putting that project on hold.

https://twitter.com/autselfadvocacy/status/1510346352420610053?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

Giving autistic people control over genetic databases is the key point, tweeted **Mary Doherty**, founder of Autistic Doctors International and a consultant anesthetist at Our Lady's Hospital in Navan, Ireland.

https://twitter.com/AutisticDoctor/status/1510357029466120195?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

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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