

## SPOTTED

# Spotted around the web: Autism research from Iran, South Africa and Australia

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## Research roundup

- Geographical differences in age at autism diagnosis may be best explained by factors such as gender, insurance status and maternal occupation, a small study of Iranian families shows. [Iranian Journal of Psychiatry](#)
- Autistic people have varying attitudes regarding autism terminology, and they generally agree that personal preferences should trump all, according to a survey of English-speaking autistic adults. [Autism Research](#)
- Changes in the medial prefrontal cortex — namely, decreased NMDA receptor function and reduced excitability of interneurons — may underlie altered social behaviors in a mouse model of autism. [Cell Reports](#)
- Parents of autistic children are often enthusiastic about early-intervention programs and may feel lost when such programs end. [Autism](#)
- The autism-linked SYNGAP1 gene appears to contribute to the developmental assembly of excitatory neural circuitry in mice, according to a preprint. [bioRxiv](#)
- Autistic people say that pivotal response treatment has positive (following the child's lead) and negative (overemphasis on spoken language) aspects. [Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders](#)
- Limiting the use of terms such as “symptoms” and “disorder” makes it difficult to accurately describe profound autism, researchers and advocates suggest. One author argued for using the term “[profound autism](#)” in an opinion piece for *Spectrum* earlier this year. [Autism Research](#)
- Autistic people who experience more stigma tend to perceive identity-first language as less preferable and more offensive than those who strongly identify with their autism. [Autism](#)

**Brain-behavior link:** Parvalbumin interneurons are diminished in the somatosensory cortex (upper panels) but not the hippocampus (lower panels) in a mouse model of autism.

- The gene SCN2A carries the most de novo mutations in the genomes of people with autism, according to a recent analysis. **Biomedicines**
- Government officials in South Africa, where there is no national policy on autism, recognize gaps in the public health system and challenges that must be overcome to improve services, according to a survey. **Autism**

## Science and society

- “You live your life on a waitlist,” says a parent of an autistic child in eastern Kentucky, where demand exceeds available services. **WKYT**
- A documentary film about the first person diagnosed with autism, entitled “In a Different Key,” aired on PBS this week. *Spectrum* reviewed the **book** when it came out in 2016. **Disability Scoop**
- Gene-editing expert Fyodor Urnov writes about the financial and regulatory constraints that limit clinical use of CRISPR technology. **The New York Times**
- A new emergency room protocol in Tennessee has been established to de-escalate behavioral issues that emerge from disabilities, after a 19-year-old woman with SYNGAP1-related intellectual disability was treated as a psychiatric crisis case. **Fox 17**
- The U.S. National Institutes of Health has proposed a change in grant application review criteria, designed to address reputational bias that undervalues research at small and minority-serving institutions. **Nature**
- Neuralink, a technology company led by Elon Musk that aims to develop brain implants as neurological treatments, is under federal investigation for mistreating research animals. **Reuters**
- Some University of California workers have returned to their jobs, while others stay out on strike. **The New York Times**
- Updated national guidelines in Australia emphasize affirmation of autism as a neurodiverse condition and focus on support services over treatments. **ABC News**

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