

SPOTTED

Boy bias; incontinence issues; smart search and more

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WEEK OF OCTOBER 16TH

Boy bias

In pursuit of why autism **seems to favor boys**, researchers have turned to mice missing a stretch of chromosome 16 that has been tied to autism. Male mice lacking this region, called **16p11.2**, show **altered activity of ERK1**, a molecule critical to brain signaling. But female mice don't show this disruption, according to results published 17 October in *Molecular Psychiatry*.

Male, but not female, mice also have increased levels of a protein that relays the **chemical messenger** dopamine signals into cells. Dopamine is a key player in learning-reward pathways, which reinforce actions that lead to payoffs. And yes, male — but not female — mice show increased ERK1 activity in response to a reward of a sip of sugar water.

SOURCES:

Molecular Psychiatry / 17 Oct 2017

Male-specific deficits in natural reward learning in a mouse model of neurodevelopmental disorders
<https://www.nature.com/mp/journal/vaop/ncurrent/full/mp2017184a.html>

Epic wait-lists

A cross-party group of 140 members of the U.K. Parliament has asked the nation's health secretary to act in response to "unacceptable" delays in **confirming autism diagnoses**. Current wait times for children referred for assessment are at least 44 months, *The Guardian* reported 14 October.

SOURCES:

The Guardian / 14 Oct 2017

MPs urge action on lengthy wait for autism diagnosis

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/oct/14/autism-diagnosis-waiting-times-jeremy-hunt>

Autism school destroyed

Devastating Northern California fires destroyed a school for children with autism last week. In addition to grappling with material damage, the staff of **Anova School** in Santa Rosa also worry about meeting their **students' emotional needs**. Disasters can be especially difficult for children on the spectrum, *NPR* reported 14 October.

SOURCES:

NPR / 14 Oct 2017

A school for kids with autism copes with a fire's physical and emotional damage

<http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/10/14/557473408/a-school-for-kids-with-autism-copes-with-fires-physical-and-emotional-damage>

Incontinence issues

A review of findings from 33 publications suggests **incontinence is more common** among children who have autism than among typically developing children. The reverse is also true, according to results published 10 October in *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*: Children with incontinence are more likely than those without to have autism features.

SOURCES:

European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry / 10 Oct 2017

Incontinence in autism spectrum disorder: a systematic review

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs00787-017-1062-3>

India updates

The 10 million people with autism in India **need more services** and more understanding about the condition, *Asian News International* reported on 14 October. The Indian state of Kerala is **pursuing a remedy** with a plan to build 140 'autism parks' — centers for services — in the next three years,

the *Deccan Chronicle* reported on 14 October.

SOURCES:

Asian News International / 14 Oct 2017

1 in 68 kids in India diagnosed with autism: Experts

<http://www.thehansindia.com/posts/index/Life-Style/2017-10-14/1-in-68-kids-in-India-diagnosed-with-autism-Experts/333190>

Deccan Chronicle / 14 Oct 2017

Kerala to get 140 autism parks in three years: Education minister C Raveendranath

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/in-other-news/141017/kerala-to-get-140-autism-parks-in-three-years-education-minister-c-raveendranath.html>

Mandate access

Insurance mandates requiring treatment coverage for children with autism are in effect in the District of Columbia and all but four states in the United States. Since the mandates were implemented, people on the spectrum aged 21 years or younger have shown a **3.4 percent increase** in the use of services, according to findings published 1 October in *Health Affairs*.

SOURCES:

Health Affairs / 01 Oct 2017

Effects of state insurance mandates on health care use and spending for autism spectrum disorder
<http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/36/10/1754>

Smart search

Anyone involved in autism research knows the reality of information overload. The **Semantic Scholar** search engine offers relief in the form of interactive visuals that sort and summarize the results of literature searches. The engine, developed by the Allen Institute for Artificial Intelligence, **relies on artificial intelligence** to extract the information. It now includes neuroscience-related publications, according to a 17 October statement.

SOURCES:

Business Wire / 17 Oct 2017

The Allen Institute for Artificial Intelligence adds over 30 million biomedical papers to Semantic Scholar

<http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20171017005717/en/Allen-Institute-Artificial-Intelligence->

AI2-Adds-30

Neurodiverse naturalist

Chris Packham is the recognizable face of a series of popular British nature programs. Packham was diagnosed with autism in his 40s, which has led him to a new kind of project. His **new documentary**, “Chris Packham: Asperger’s And Me,” follows him as he travels to the United States and visits various places promising autism treatments, reported *The Telegraph* on 9 October.

Packham calls people promoting autism cures “charlatans and sharks.” He also sees differences in neurology as a positive.

“There is no doubt at all in my mind that a great number of people in the past that have led advances in our civilization have had autistic traits,” he tells *The Telegraph*. “We have to see this breadth of neurological difference as extremely advantageous to our species.”

SOURCES:

The Telegraph / 09 Oct 2017

Chris Packham on living with Asperger’s: ‘I’ve spent 30 years on the telly trying my best to act normal’

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2017/10/09/chris-packham-living-aspergers-spent-30-years-telly-trying-best/>

Addiction issues

Addiction is **more common** among people with autism than the general population. A new book, “Drinking, Drug Use and Addiction in the Autism Community,” looks at **factors that contribute** to these higher rates. The book, which also offers suggestions for supporting people who have both autism and a substance use disorder, debuted 19 October.

SOURCES:

University of North Carolina Health Care System / 16 Oct 2017

New book explores drinking, drug abuse, and addiction in the autism community

<http://www.newswise.com/articles/new-book-explores-drinking-drug-abuse-and-addiction-in-the-autism-community>

Awards season

It's an awards season of sorts in the autism research community. At its 2017 meeting, the American Society of Human Genetics **presented its leadership award to Arthur Beaudet** of Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, and a genomics research award to **Nicholas Katsanis** of Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. The presentations took place 17 October.

Separately, the National Academy of Medicine awarded the 2017 Rhoda and Bernard Sarnat International Prize in Mental Health to three people, including autism researchers **Catherine Lord** of New York-Presbyterian Hospital and **Matthew State** of the University of California, San Francisco. The institute **announced the awards** on 16 October.

SOURCES:

National Academy of Medicine / 16 Oct 2017

Joseph Coyle, Catherine Lord, and Matthew State Receive National Academy of Medicine's Sarnat Award for Outstanding Achievements in Improving Mental Health

<http://www8.nationalacademies.org/onpinews/newsitem.aspx?RecordID=10162017c>
American Society of Human Genetics / 17 Oct 2017

ASHG2017 Conference Programme

<http://www.ashg.org/2017meeting/listing/NumberedSessions.shtml#sess2>

News tips

Do you have a new paper coming out? Are you making a career move? Did you see a study or news story that you want to share? Send your news tips to **news@spectrumnews.org**.
