

SPOTTED

Brexit effect; ghost game; down with jargon

BY EMILY ANTHES

1 JULY 2016

WEEK OF JUNE 27TH

Brexit effect

Scientists are anxious about the possible ramifications that **the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union** will have on U.K. research, *Nature* reported last Friday.

In a referendum held on 23 June, British citizens voted to leave the EU. **Much uncertainty remains** about what the results will ultimately mean for the U.K.

But British scientists worry that a departure could mean losing a significant source of funding and access to EU grant programs. Universities in the U.K. **receive about 16 percent of their funding** from the EU, *Nature* reported.

Researchers are also uncertain about what an EU exit might mean for their international collaborations or for **European students and scientists working and studying in the U.K.**

"British scientists will have to work hard in the future to counter the isolationism of Brexit if our science is to continue to thrive," **Paul Nurse**, a geneticist who heads London's Francis Crick Institute, told journalists, according to *Nature*.

SOURCES:

Nature / 24 Jun 2016

Researchers reeling as UK votes to leave EU

<http://www.nature.com/news/researchers-reeling-as-uk-votes-to-leave-eu-1.20153>**BuzzFeed** / 29 Jun 2016

These young scientists are afraid they'll have to leave the U.K. because of Brexit

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/nidhisubbaraman/young-scientists-fear-brexit>

Ghost game

A new **video game** may boost the thinking skills of children with certain genetic conditions.

Fragile X syndrome, **Williams syndrome** and Turner syndrome can cause cognitive difficulties, such as problems processing information about space and time. Some research suggests that video games may enhance this ability.

In 'Fastbrain,' created by **Tony Simon**, professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the University of California, Davis, **players 'zap' ghosts** that pop up at varying times and positions on a computer screen. The game's difficulty automatically ramps up as a player improves.

In a test, several children with neurodevelopmental conditions improved their performance after just two to three hours of play spread out over several weeks. Research is ongoing.

SOURCES:

UC Davis MIND Institute / 22 Jun 2016

"Digital neurotherapeutic" in development at the UC Davis MIND Institute
<http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/publish/news/mindinstitute/11249>

Tricky technology

Some video games may be therapeutic, but that doesn't mean children should have unlimited screen time. Managing a **child's access to technology** may be especially difficult for parents of children with autism, Alexandra Samuel writes in an article in Sunday's *Wall Street Journal*.

Samuel, a technology researcher, gives tips based on parenting her own son, age 10, who has autism.

Although some digital content, such as certain video games, may be too stimulating for children with autism, offerings such as audio books can help a child wind down and escape from sensory overload. "We've found that a good rule of thumb is to keep an eye on which games or activities lead to tantrums when it is time to wrap up: This kind of screen time is too stimulating," Samuel writes.

Parents should also look out for apps that track children's behaviors, meals and medications. And online support groups can give both children and their parents a sense of community, she writes.

SOURCES:

The Wall Street Journal / 26 Jun 2016

Personal technology and the autistic child: What one family has learned

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/personal-technology-and-the-autistic-child-what-one-family-has-learned-1466993100>

Fearful fish

Blind, antisocial cavefish may be a promising animal model for autism and schizophrenia, according to research presented at the **23rd International Conference on Subterranean Biology** in Fayetteville, Arkansas, earlier this month.

Cave-dwelling Mexican tetras are solitary creatures. Unlike related fish that live at the water's surface, they do not form schools or social groups. They also show hyperactive, anxious and **repetitive behaviors**, traits that can accompany autism, and they have many of the same genes linked to psychiatric conditions in people.

In a new study, **Masato Yoshizawa**, assistant professor of biology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, found that fluoxetine, an antidepressant, and **clozapine, an antipsychotic**, spur the normally **hyperactive, sleepless fish to move less** and snooze more. **The drugs, which may also alleviate behaviors associated with autism**, have similar effects in people, *Science* magazine reported last week.

SOURCES:

Science / 24 Jun 2016

Antisocial cave fish may hold clues to schizophrenia, autism

<http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2016/06/antisocial-cave-fish-may-hold-clues-schizophrenia-autism>

Down with jargon

Using technical and academic terminology might seem like a good way to impress others, but **speaking in jargon** “could make you sound less professional,” journalist Roxanne Khamsi writes in an article published Wednesday in *The Week*.

In a 2015 study, scientists found that actors interacting with medical trainees **viewed those who**

used jargon as less professional than trainees who avoided big words.

Technical terms can also mask ignorance or even deceit. Research published last year revealed that academic papers that had been retracted for fraud contained **approximately 60 more jargony terms** than unretracted papers.

“Is there a time and a place for big words? Yes, certainly,” Khamsi writes. “But if you must use them, introduce them only after you clearly convey the concepts they describe.”

SOURCES:

The Week / 22 Jun 2016

Ban jargon!

<http://theweek.com/articles/629440/ban-jargon>

Awards

James Gusella, professor of neurogenetics at Harvard Medical School, **has received the William Allan Award** from the **American Society of Human Genetics**. The \$25,000 prize honors “substantial and far-reaching scientific contributions to human genetics.” Gusella has identified genes associated with a range of neurological disorders, including autism, Alzheimer’s disease and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

SOURCES:

American Society of Human Genetics / 28 Jun 2016

ASHG honors James F. Gusella with William Allan Award

<http://www.ashg.org/press/201606-Allan-Award.html>
