

**SPOTTED**

# Clinton care; autism in Africa; gender grievance

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## Clinton care

Hillary Clinton **unveiled a detailed mental health care agenda** on Monday designed to expand access to quality care for the roughly 44 million adults and 17 million children in the United States **who have mental health issues**.

Clinton aims to improve early diagnosis, for example, by increasing screenings for maternal depression and training school staff to spot mental health problems in children, according to her website. She plans to establish a national suicide prevention initiative, train law enforcement to interact with people who have psychiatric conditions, and invest in research on the brain and behavior.

She also promises to step up enforcement of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, which requires insurers to provide mental health care benefits equivalent to those for other conditions.

“The next generation must grow up knowing that mental health is a key component of overall health and there is no shame, stigma, or barriers to seeking out care,” reads a policy briefing on Clinton’s site.

### SOURCES:

**hillaryclinton.com** / 29 Aug 2016

Hillary Clinton’s comprehensive agenda on mental health

<https://www.hillaryclinton.com/briefing/factsheets/2016/08/29/hillary-clintons-comprehensive-agenda-on-mental-health/>**STAT** / 29 Aug 2016

Hillary Clinton rolling out comprehensive mental health plan

<https://www.statnews.com/2016/08/29/hillary-clinton-mental-health-plan/>

## Autism in Africa

Research on **autism in sub-Saharan Africa** is “urgently needed,” a team of scientists write in the September issue of *The Lancet*.

Nearly 1 billion people — 40 percent of them children under age 14 — live in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet there is little data on the **prevalence** of autism or other neurodevelopmental disorders.

One reason for the research gap, the researchers write, is the lack of diagnostic tools. The instruments used in high-income countries may not be culturally appropriate in the region and are costly to adapt and translate. A lack of awareness of autism may also contribute, particularly if families do not seek or find appropriate care.

The scientists call for efforts to educate Africans about autism, develop new screening tools and gather epidemiological data.

Because of Africa’s enormous genetic diversity, autism research on the continent could be particularly fruitful. “Africa could provide unique insights to the pathogenesis of the disorder and into gene-environment interactions,” the researchers write.

### SOURCES:

**The Lancet** / 24 Aug 2016

Autism spectrum disorders in sub-Saharan Africa

[http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(16\)30138-9/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(16)30138-9/abstract)

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## Big brain projects

The heads of **six major brain initiatives** detailed the inner workings of their ambitious research projects in the September issue of *Nature Neuroscience*.

The leaders of the big brain projects — located in the European Union, the United States, Japan, China and Israel — highlighted their enormous diversity.

Two of the programs are based in the U.S. The Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (**BRAIN**) Initiative aims to develop scientific tools that help researchers decode neural circuits. By contrast, the **brain mapping projects** at the Allen Institute for Brain Science in Seattle involve creating detailed atlases of mouse, monkey and human brains.

At the Allen Institute, researchers seek “to understand the biological and biophysical properties of a speck (roughly 1 mm<sup>3</sup>) of the most complex piece of highly excitable matter in the known universe: cerebral cortex,” writes **Christof Koch**, president and chief scientific officer of the institute.

The China Brain Project takes a more applied tack. Its goals including improving early diagnosis and interventions for brain conditions and developing brain-machine interfaces.

The researchers also discussed challenges such as collaborating across disciplines and national borders, and ensuring that the different initiatives complement each other.

**SOURCES:**

**Nature Neuroscience** / 26 Aug 2016

Worldwide initiatives to advance brain research

<http://www.nature.com/neuro/journal/v19/n9/full/nn.4371.html>

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## Gender grievance

A neuroimmunologist at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has filed an Equal Employment Opportunity complaint against several people at the research institution, **alleging gender bias**, *The Washington Post* reported on Sunday.

**Bibiana Bielekova** filed the complaint after twice being passed over as a candidate for tenure despite a positive review of her work by outside researchers.

Women constitute just 22 percent of the tenured scientists at the NIH, a slight increase from 19 percent in 2011, *The Washington Post* reported.

“Women are considered second-rate citizens,” Bielekova told the newspaper.

**Walter J. Koroshetz**, director of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, where Bielekova works, says he bases tenure decisions on the institute’s overall program needs, not on gender.

NIH officials say that its tenure statistics are in line with those from similar research institutions and that it has been trying to improve the gender balance.

**SOURCES:**

**The Washington Post** / 28 Aug 2016

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At NIH, one woman says gender bias has blocked promotions

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/at-nih-one-woman-says-gender-bias-has-blocked-promotions/2016/08/28/e529171e-63cf-11e6-96c0-37533479f3f5\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/at-nih-one-woman-says-gender-bias-has-blocked-promotions/2016/08/28/e529171e-63cf-11e6-96c0-37533479f3f5_story.html)

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## Disability discourse

People living with disabilities “are the largest minority group in the United States,” Rosemarie Garland-Thomson **writes in the first column** of a new *New York Times* **series about disability** that launched 19 August.

One in five Americans has some sort of disability, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And that number could grow as new types of disabilities — such as those associated with aging — emerge.

Most people will experience disability at least once in their lives, Garland-Thomson points out, but discussions of disability remain fraught. “Since most of us are not born into disability but enter into it as we travel through life, we don’t get acculturated the way most of us do in our race or gender,” she writes.

The newspaper asked readers to share their experiences with disability. **Commenters wrote about marginalization**, stigma, pride and finding fellowship. “I found communities online where there were heated and engaging conversations about what it means to have a disability in a world that isn’t built with us in mind,” writes reader Erin Hawley. “That’s when I proudly labeled myself disabled.”

### SOURCES:

**The New York Times** / 19 Aug 2016

Becoming disabled

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/21/opinion/sunday/becoming-disabled.html>**The New York Times**

/ 25 Aug 2016

What disability means

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/25/opinion/what-disability-means.html>

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## Job news

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