

SPOTTED

Healthy choices; gender divide; criminal citation

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Healthy choices

Donald Trump has yet to announce who will lead two of the United States' top health agencies: The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). But some candidates for the posts are already sparking controversy.

Two men in the running for FDA chief, **Balaji Srinivasan** and **Jim O'Neill**, are businessmen with **no medical background**, *Bloomberg Businessweek* reported this week.

Srinivasan, a former biotechnology industry executive, tweeted in August that the "FDA bears responsibility for many deaths. Blocked many good drugs," according to *Bloomberg Businessweek*. The tweet has since been deleted. O'Neill, a Silicon Valley investor, says the FDA should not decide whether a drug works, arguing that the market will work that out, according to the magazine.

The **candidates for NIH chief** seem more qualified. One contender, Stanford University epidemiologist **John Ioannidis**, told *Nature* last week that he would need to "make sure there are no strings attached in promoting any anti-science ideas."

Also in the running are Maryland congressman and anesthesiologist **Andy Harris**, billionaire surgeon **Patrick Soon-Shiong**, and retired army neurosurgeon and former director of biotechnology at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, **Geoffrey Ling**. For now, NIH director **Francis Collins** will **keep his post**.

SOURCES:

Bloomberg Businessweek / 17 Jan 2017

New FDA chief should have medical experience, drugmakers say

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-01-17/new-fda-chief-should-have-medical->

experience-drugmakers-say **Nature** / 13 Jan 2017

Surprising contenders emerge for Trump's NIH chief

<http://www.nature.com/news/surprising-contenders-emerge-for-trump-s-nih-chief-1.21295>

Gender divide

A BBC documentary that aired last week highlights the overlap between autism and gender dysphoria — a mismatch between a person's biological sex and perceived gender.

The documentary, titled “**Transgender kids: Who knows best?**” centers on Canadian psychologist Kenneth Zucker. Zucker says that some children become fixated on gender because they have autism. These children may one day outgrow the feeling that they were born the wrong gender, he says. So transitioning to the other sex is not always the answer.

“Just because kids are saying something doesn't necessarily mean you accept it, or that it's true, or that it could be in the best interests of the child,” Zucker says in the film, according to *The Telegraph*. Zucker's view drew fury from the **transgender community**, leading to his termination from Toronto's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in 2015.

Guidelines released last year recommend that teenagers seeking treatment at gender clinics be screened for autism and those with autism be assessed for gender concerns. But there is no consensus on how best to treat individuals with both conditions.

Spectrum has followed the emerging link between gender dysphoria and autism. An opinion piece by Emily Brooks explains how some people on the spectrum **do not identify as men or women**. And a story by Deborah Rudacille explores the challenges people with **autism and gender dysphoria** face in advocating for themselves.

SOURCES:

BBC / 12 Jan 2017

Transgender kids: Who knows best?

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b088kxbw> **U.K. Telegraph** / 12 Jan 2017

Children who believe they are transgender 'could have autism,' says controversial expert

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/12/children-believe-transgender-could-have-autism-says-controversial/>

Criminal citation

You've heard of drug cartels. But what about **citation cartels**? They're gangs of researchers who agree to cite one another's work — or work in a particular journal — to artificially inflate the impact of their work or of a journal.

An article in *STAT* last week by Ivan Oransky and Adam Marcus offers an extreme example of this shady behavior. (Oransky is on *Spectrum's* advisory board.) A 2010 paper in the *Medical Science Monitor* has 490 references, 445 of which come from the journal *Cell Transplantation*. All but one of the rest come from the *Medical Science Monitor*. And guess what: Three of the four authors on the 2010 paper sit on the editorial board of *Cell Transplantation*.

Artificially inflating the impact of a particular scientist or journal is like cutting cocaine with baking powder, Oransky and Marcus write. "It'll work on the street for a little while. But when you're found out, it won't be pretty."

SOURCES:

STAT / 13 Jan 2017

Gaming the system, scientific 'cartels' band together to cite each others' work

<https://www.statnews.com/2017/01/13/citation-cartels-science/>

Empathy bridge

Heeju Kim wants people to put themselves in the shoes of someone with autism.

Kim, an artist who has a younger brother with autism, created "**An empathy bridge for autism**" — a toolkit containing virtual reality glasses, headphones and unusually shaped lollipops designed to recreate the sensory sensitivities and language difficulties of someone on the spectrum. The kit was highlighted last week in *Dezeen*, a design and architecture magazine.

The kit "can never fully emulate the autistic world," Kim wrote on the website for the Royal College of Arts in London, U.K. But "it still serves as an accessible bridge toward a mutual understanding between autistic and non-autistic people."

SOURCES:

Dezeen / 08 Jan 2017

Empathy kit uses augmented reality and candy to help users better understand autism

<https://www.dezeen.com/2017/01/08/heeju-kim-emapthy-bridge-kit-help-users-understand-autism-augmented-reality-candy/>

Family matters

The Royal Society wants scientists to know that they can have successful careers as well as rich family lives.

The U.K. organization, whose mission is to support excellence in science, **profiles 150 scientists**, with the aim of inspiring young researchers to “succeed in science regardless of their commitments outside work.”

“Providing information on both their career and their personal journey through a timeline of academic, career and family milestones, this resource highlights the various formulas utilised by mothers, fathers and carers in the efforts to balance a career in science with family life,” the society’s website reads.

Work-life balance was the focus of a special report by *Spectrum* last November.

SOURCES:

The Royal Society /

Parent carer scientist

<https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/diversity-in-science/parent-carer-scientist/>

Job news

Making a career move? Send your news to **jobmoves@spectrumnews.org**.
