

**SPOTTED**

# Spotted around the web: Developing striatum, autism incidence in Japan, psychedelic therapies

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**WEEK OF MAY 10<sup>TH</sup>**

## Research roundup

- JASPER, a naturalistic social-communication intervention for autistic children, seems to increase child-initiated interactions, a key step in language development. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*
- A catalog of RNA from single cells in the fetal striatum, a brain area **implicated in autism**, may unveil transcription hierarchies involved in early development. *Science*

**RNA Catalog:** Analyzing RNA species in fetal brain may reveal how their interactions drive striatal development.

- Adults who have epilepsy caused by focal cortical dysplasia, an atypical pattern of neuronal layers, tend to have more autism traits than those without epilepsy. *Epilepsy & Behavior*
- Treatment for sleep problems in autistic adults is rarely effective, according to a new survey. *Autism*
- Another recent survey based on self-reports suggests that autistic adults also have poorer diets and get less exercise and sleep than non-autistic adults. *Molecular Autism*
- In Japan, 2.75 percent of children born from 2009 to 2014 were diagnosed with autism by age 5, a higher incidence than has been reported elsewhere. *Spectrum's prevalence map* tracks similar studies around the world. *JAMA Network Open*

- An injection of oxytocin appears to reverse social deficits in a **strain of mice** with mutations in the autism-linked CHD8 gene; the mechanism of this effect remains unclear, however, because the hormone is **too large to enter the brain**. *BMC Neuroscience*
- Autistic girls are diagnosed, on average, 14 months later than autistic boys, because they often present with few repetitive behaviors and satisfactory language skills. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*
- An expert panel recommends focusing on traits rather than diagnoses when prescribing antipsychotics for children. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*
- Long-read sequencing is a useful way to study large genomic alterations called structural variants, which typically exceed 50 base pairs in length. *Nature Genetics*

### Science and society

- Writers Steve Silberman, Eric Garcia and Sara Luterman discuss the shift in thinking about autism that led to this year's renaming of April as Autism Acceptance Month. *1A*
  - The psychedelic drugs MDMA and psilocybin appear poised to become mainstream treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder and depression, respectively, after clinical trials have shown their effectiveness. *The New York Times*
  - Research involving autistic people and virtual reality is on the agenda of a virtual conference slated for 12 to 14 May 2021. *Applications of Virtual Reality in Autism Research*
  - An article for young readers explains the 'double empathy problem' — how conversation styles differ between autistic and non-autistic people and can lead to communication breakdowns. *Frontiers for Young Minds*
  - North Carolina lawmakers have sent a bill to the governor that would allow behavior analysts to work with autistic children without the direct supervision of a psychologist. *The Progressive Pulse*
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