

SPOTTED

Spotted around the web: Heart rate in autism, suicide screening, accelerating gene therapies

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5 NOVEMBER 2021

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 1ST

Research roundup

- Among nurses in Ethiopia, those with higher levels of education or more experience with autistic people tend to be the most knowledgeable about autism. *Spectrum* has previously covered one autism researcher's strategies for **training health workers** in Ethiopia. ***SAGE Open Medicine***
- A genetic analysis of autistic people in Brazil highlights 14 genes with rare copy number variants, many of which play a role in cell adhesion. ***Clinical Genetics***
- The Thai Diagnostic Autism Scale appears to be reliable and suitable for evaluating Thai children up to age 4. ***Autism Research***
- Syndromes associated with autism and caused by single-gene mutations are prime candidates for gene therapy, through either transient or permanent alteration of genes. ***Genes***
- Mutations in the *GABRB2* gene, which codes for a subunit of the GABA-A receptor, are associated with many neuropsychiatric conditions, including autism. ***Gene***
- Screening children with neurodevelopmental conditions for suicide risk during specialty healthcare visits appears to be feasible, although parents often decline the screening. ***Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics***
- Children with autism experience higher heart rates during laboratory experiments than do those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. *Spectrum* took a close look at **autonomic function** in autism in 2019. ***Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders***
- Autistic youth tend to write more slowly and illegibly than their non-autistic peers, and often produce poorer written content, as assessed by the Six Trait Writing Model. ***Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders***

- Some caregivers of children with special healthcare needs quit working or reduce their work hours; from 2016 to 2017, this occurred in 41 percent of families with children with intellectual disability. [Pediatrics](#)

Science and society

- A U.S.-based coalition of pharmaceutical companies and nonprofit organizations has formed to speed up research and development of gene therapies. [STAT](#)
- Autistic people may get so used to camouflaging to accommodate non-autistic people that they lose sight of who they really are, an autistic writer says. [The Swaddle](#)
- Tom Oliver, a law student on the spectrum, argues in a TEDx talk that a misunderstanding of autism leads to unfair arrests and prosecutions of autistic people. Read more about interactions between [autistic people and law enforcement](#) in *Spectrum's* 2020 special report. [YouTube](#)
- Cryo-electron tomography has prompted new insights into how intracellular structures interact with other cell components. [Nature](#)

Up close: Cryo-electron tomography offers a peek inside cells with outstanding detail.

S. Albert et al./PNAS

- Four early-career researchers with disabilities describe the subtle and not-so-subtle ways that their mentors and institutions make their work more difficult. [Nature](#)
 - Professional societies of women scientists have struggled with where to draw the gender line: Include transgender and nonbinary people in their membership or not? [Undark](#)
 - The American Psychological Association has issued an apology for engaging in racism and racial discrimination, emphasizing that the apology was overdue. [NPR](#)
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