

SPOTTED

Spotted around the web: Mislabeled ‘autism traits,’ cerebellum in autism, medicinal cannabis

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Research roundup

- The Classroom Observation Scale, an autism screening tool developed in English for use by teachers, appears to translate well to Chinese-language settings. *Autism*
- A magnetic resonance imaging study confirms previous postmortem findings that autistic people tend to have altered brain microstructures. *European Journal of Neuroscience*

Altered morphology: Autistic people may have increased gray matter in some brain areas, such as the right orbitofrontal cortex.

- It is misleading to label difficulties in social communication as ‘autism traits,’ researchers argue, as there may be other reasons for the observed behavior. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*
- Pregnant women with a psychiatric diagnosis have an elevated chance of having a child with a neurodevelopmental condition such as autism; whether they take selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, however, has no effect on those odds. *Biological Psychiatry*
- Heightened motor activity in toddlers appears to be an early sign of autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*
- Medicinal cannabis may help manage autism-related behaviors in children and make it possible to lower their doses of prescription psychotropic drugs. *Child: Care, Health and*

Development

- Researchers continue to explore the cerebellum's role beyond motor control in cognition, behavior and development. A *Spectrum* explainer describes how the **cerebellum** may be involved in autism. ***Cellular and Molecular Life Sciences***
- Infants later diagnosed with autism have atypical brain connectivity patterns by 9 months of age. ***Cerebral Cortex***
- Mutations in the KIF2A gene, linked to drug-resistant epilepsy, cause behavioral changes and susceptibility to seizures in zebrafish. ***eNeuro***

Science and society

- Despite laws that say employers cannot discriminate against workers with disabilities, such bias likely contributes to the high rates of unemployment and underemployment among people on the spectrum. ***Medical News Today***
 - Autistic journalist Matthew Rosza talked to autistic author Eric Garcia about his new book, "We're Not Broken." ***Salon***
 - David Sabatini, who first described mTOR — a protein involved in cellular growth and linked to autism — has been fired from Howard Hughes Medical Institute and has resigned from the Whitehead Institute because of sexual harassment charges. *Spectrum* **profiled Sabatini** and his brother in 2018. ***Science***
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