

SPOTTED

Spotted around the web: Polypharmacy, poison exons, infant social attention

BY JILL ADAMS

21 MAY 2021

WEEK OF MAY 17TH

Research roundup

- A new model shows how cognitive differences may predispose autistic people to anxiety. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*
- Hyperexcitability in a mouse model of fragile X syndrome appears to be mediated in part by neurons in the lateral amygdala, which fire more and form stronger excitatory synapses than those in control mice. *eNeuro*
- Similar neural networks are activated in autistic and non-autistic people as they observe facial emotions, even when their behavioral responses differ. *Biological Psychiatry: Cognitive Neuroscience and Neuroimaging*
- The genetics of some neurodevelopmental conditions involve poison exons, extra bits of DNA that disrupt protein transcription; **targeting these spliced-in segments** with antisense RNA may be therapeutic, as *Spectrum* reported last year. *Developmental Neuroscience*
- Infant social attention, which may be different in people with autism, may also be necessary for the development of social and neurocognitive brain systems. *Scientific American*
- Autistic boys and young men, along with those who have another psychiatric diagnosis or self-injurious or aggressive behaviors, are more likely to take multiple psychotropic medications than other autistic youth; *Spectrum* has covered the problem of **polypharmacy** in autistic children. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychopharmacology*
- In 2020, people with autism living in Europe had difficulty accessing social services and healthcare, including COVID-19-specific services. *BMJ Open*
- Children do not have an elevated chance of having autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder if their mothers were given oxytocin during labor, according to a study of 1.5 million births. *International Journal of Epidemiology*
- A single family in Colombia shows variable phenotypes of fragile X syndrome and a range of genetic profiles, including different numbers of nucleotide repeats and methylation

patterns. *Spectrum* has covered the **fragile X cluster** in Colombia in depth. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*

- People born preterm or with low birth weight appear to be more likely to have a child with autism than people without these birth histories. *International Journal of Epidemiology*

Science and society

- Nonprofit, for-profit and government agencies in Phoenix, Arizona, are collaborating to provide housing and other services for autistic adults, but unmet needs remain, writes the founder of an autism services organization. *AZCentral*
 - The lawyer for the so-called 'QAnon Shaman,' a man facing federal charges for his role in the 6 January attack on the U.S. Capitol, says his client's autism made him susceptible to propaganda. *Salon*
-