

NEWS

Takeaways from SfN 2016

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After five days featuring hundreds of posters, presentations and symposia, the 46th **annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience** (SfN) has come to a close.

More than 30,000 people attended SfN this year in San Diego, enough to power a small army. From **two new CHD8 mouse models** to **'mini-brain' assays**, a wide range of science and novel techniques went on display. The Spectrum team was on site, reporting about 50 stories from the

mammoth meeting. You can read all of our coverage [here](#).

We also hosted a [Twitter Q&A](#) between SfN attendees and the broader autism community, using the hashtag #SFNChat. The question that seemed to generate the most chatter was how scientists can better communicate their findings to the public — a topic [Bhismadev Chakrabarti tackled](#) in our [special report on scientists' lives](#).

Each day at SfN, we asked attendees for their [perspectives on the research](#) presented at the conference.

By the end, one big theme emerged: how autism relates to bigger questions in neuroscience.

[Mark Wallace](#) of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, says one of the most exciting aspects of the conference this year was the large number of young neuroscientists “tackling the challenges of autism and its basis in the brain.”

“[The conference] gives us great hope for our approaches to autism diagnosis, treatment and efforts to relate brain changes — from the molecular level to the whole-brain level — to the various features of autism,” says Wallace, who investigates [multisensory processing in autism](#).

Back to basics:

[Emanuel DiCicco-Bloom](#) of Rutgers University in New Jersey says that fundamental understanding promises to point us toward drug targets and potential therapies for the condition.

Cognitive neuroscientist [David Beversdorf](#) of the University of Missouri, notes that autism has become a growing focus of the meeting. But, he says, one of the meeting's charms is the wealth of neuroscience that is only indirectly related to autism.

Scientists who study autism can learn a lot from this broader perspective as they move forward with their work.

“While autism research in the past was usually presented far away from basic neurodevelopment, now it is embedded in it,” says [Chiara Manzini](#) of George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Autism researchers as a group are becoming increasingly sophisticated in their understanding and investigation of the brain, adds [Scott Soderling](#) of Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. “The field seems poised to utilize these new opportunities to address autism.”

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