OPINION

How would you spend $9 million?

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Autism lags behind other brain disorders in terms of efforts to develop effective treatments. There are no medications that treat the core symptoms of autism, and **none on the immediate horizon**.

As we **reported last week**, the National Institute of Mental Health has awarded a $9 million grant to the University of California, Los Angeles in an effort to help solve that problem. The scheme aims to streamline autism drug development by ruling out ineffective chemical compounds within weeks, rather than years.

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The three-year program is part of the institute's **fast-fail strategy**, which will fund a battery of small clinical trials for testing new and existing drugs. Any drug candidate that shows promise will be fast-tracked for larger trials and development.

What do you think about this approach?

- **Will an industry-like approach such as this one be enough to jump-start pharmaceutical treatments for autism?**

- **How would *you* fund drug development? What would you do with $9 million? Or, for that matter, $1 billion? What's needed to spur progress in this area?**

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