OPINION

Savage attack

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If you?ve read this blog before, you know that I believe that the rising numbers of autism cases, the “epidemic” if you will, may be explained by **changes in how we diagnose the disease now**, and because of the special services available to children with autism.

It?s too bad that it took an ill-informed and rabid rant to get that hypothesis some mileage in the national press.

The saga began last Wednesday, when popular radio shock jock **Michael Savage** blamed bad parenting for autism and declared that “in 99 percent of the cases, [a child with autism] is a brat who hasn't been told to cut the act out."

He went on in this spectacularly ignorant fashion on his show, heard on 350 radio stations nationwide: "What do you mean they scream and they're silent? They don't have a father around to tell them, 'Don't act like a moron. You'll get nowhere in life. Stop acting like a putz. Straighten up. Act like a man. Don't sit there crying and screaming, you idiot.'"

Not surprisingly, parents and advocates in the autism community are out for blood, demanding that Savage be fired and staging protests at radio stations across the country.

What is surprising is that unlike most celebrities who put their foot in it, Savage didn?t apologize and retreat. He claimed yesterday that his comments were intended to alert people to the fact that, like attention deficit disorder, autism is an over diagnosed condition.

“This cartel of doctors and drug companies is now creating a national panic by over diagnosing "autism" for which there is no definitive medical diagnosis!" he said.

I can?t support 99 percent of his ridiculous rant, but I can certainly get behind the idea that autism has become the “illness *du jour*” and that most people are unwilling to at least consider the possibility that maybe, just maybe, it is being over diagnosed.