

OPINION

Wealthy nations dole out big doses of autism drugs

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8 JULY 2014

Doctors in wealthy countries such as Belgium, Switzerland and Australia **prescribe more medications** to people with autism than do doctors in poorer countries, including Egypt, Pakistan and Indonesia. The results were published 3 June in *Autism Research*.

A study published last year found similarly **high prescription rates** for people with autism in wealthy countries, including the U.S. and the U.K.

The numbers suggest that people in low-income countries do not receive adequate treatment, that those in high-income countries are being overmedicated, or both.

The researchers used the gross domestic product of each country as a proxy for individual income level, and collected data on diagnoses and prescriptions from **IMS Health**, a worldwide database, for the years 2007 to 2012.

The most prescribed drug is **risperidone**, an antipsychotic that decreases hyperactivity and **repetitive behavior**, and one of two drugs approved to treat symptoms of autism. Doctors also prescribe antidepressants and antiepileptic drugs in high numbers to people with autism.

