

Autism Spectrum Disorders

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Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)s range in severity from completely dysfunctional language and interpersonal interaction problems to intellectually odd savant (think Elon Musk)-type behavior. ASD diagnoses have increased dramatically in the last few decades, from approximately 1 in 150 children in 2000 to 1 in 31 children in 2022, at least in part due to making diagnoses like Asperger's, for persons with less severe symptoms than had been diagnosed in the past.

Controversy exists about what else might be contributing to the rising prevalence of ASD diagnoses. There is a known genetic component to ASDs, but no evidence that there is a gene for it that confers a survival benefit, which would increase ASD prevalence. We now have expanded dialogue concerning ASD prevalence, thanks to the current Federal administration. Reminiscent of Trump 1.0 suggesting that we inject bleach to treat COVID-19, our President, with zero science or medical training and based on one study that didn't completely control for other variables, has warned strongly against pregnant persons taking Tylenol or acetaminophen (ah-see-ta-min' -o-fen) , which is the only pain med that is approved for them, claiming it causes autism in the soon-to-be-born fetus. Any scientist would suggest that perhaps the disorder that caused the need for Tylenol might be the culprit, rather than acetaminophen. There are definite associations of various maternal diseases to an increased risk of ASD diagnoses in the child, including diabetes, obesity, autoimmune disorders, and infections with high fever, the latter two of which would likely provide an impetus to take Tylenol. We also know that exposure to fine particulate air pollution (PM 2.5) has been linked with increased risk of ASDs in children, which may contribute to the strong link between ASD and poverty. Unfortunately, neither PM2.5 pollution nor poverty have been eliminated.

No one would suggest that pregnant women should substitute opiates to manage pain or non-steroidal- anti-inflammatory-drugs (NSAIDs), like ibuprofen, for fever, since there is strong evidence that opiates cross the placenta to addict the fetus and NSAIDs can harm the

mother's kidneys and reduce amniotic fluid, harming the fetus.

There is also no scientific evidence, non-scientist RFK Junior's claims notwithstanding, for childhood vaccines causing autism. There IS proof that, without measles herd immunity from vaccines, which had enabled us to declare measles defeated in 2000, the disease is now killing children again.