

## EDITORIAL

# Scientific Narratives in Autism Spectrum Disorder

自闭症谱系障碍的科学阐述

Narrativas científicas en los trastornos del espectro autista

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Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has increased in prevalence in the United States from one in 10,000 in the 1950s to one in 88 today. And in South Korea, the prevalence is now one in 44.<sup>1</sup> If the current rate of increase in the incidence of ASD continues, it could become the norm in children in 30 years. Scientific research continues to reveal potential connections between ASD and the gut microbiome or cancer gene mutations. It occurs in all socioeconomic and ethnic groups and is almost five times more common in boys than in girls. The costs to families and society is high—Medicaid costs for children with ASD are almost five times higher than for children without a diagnosis of ASD. And these costs do not begin to include those of intensive behavioral intervention.<sup>2</sup> Why is the prevalence of this condition increasing, and can a systems-oriented approach be used to resolve this pressing health challenge?

I was pleased when I was invited to serve as guest editor of this special issue of *Global Advances in Health and Medicine* and to in turn invite my colleagues, leading researchers and clinicians in the field of ASD, to share their wisdom and the evolution of their understanding of ASD as well as innovative treatment approaches.

Dr Pamela Compart describes the landscape of the autism spectrum, and the other five authors in this issue of *GAHMJ* describe the ups and downs in their individual paths in that landscape.

Dr S. Jill James asked that I set an example of what I had in mind, imposing on me a 6-month advance on the deadline I had expected for the others and myself. It turned out to be a small price to pay for her story and the description of folate-dependent one-carbon metabolism.

Dr Derrick MacFabe was my guest after we spoke at a meeting, and the following morning, I set a recorder in front of him, and he dictated the world's longest scientific sentence, which when transcribed and edited became a polished article on the microbiome, metabolism, and mitochondria. I am grateful to both Dr MacFabe, who made the gem sparkle, and Dr Riley—an editor who really edits—for the finished review you will find here.

Dr Deth's article on redox and methylation disorders, in which he describes partnering with key players in the ASD field as well as the involvement

and passion of parents of children with ASD, is not only informative but inspirational.

Asking a fellow clinician to write a paper on request was a daring experiment with friendship. Prolific as Dr Dan Rossignol has been over the past decade, he met the deadline with grace with an excellent case report from his experience as a parent and physician.

Collectively, the authors whose articles appear in this issue speak of individual patients, colleagues, and experiences that brought more in a moment than we might gather from a lengthy parade of evidence uncovered by reading journals or tracing the linear accumulation of clinical experience. All of these articles—and the efforts of the authors who contributed them—exceeded my expectations.

I and the editors of *GAHMJ* hope that this special issue on autism stimulates researchers and inspires clinicians who may find the cloak of evidence limited to randomized controlled trials and systematic reviews a bit uncomfortable and perhaps even a bit outdated. The evidence in these articles is reassuring in its simplicity and true in the chronology of coincidence and illustrates the strength achieved when many hands make light work.

## REFERENCES

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