



From the desk of Dr Harry

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Harry Zehnwrith MBBS (HON) FRACP

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), which includes Asperger's syndrome, affects 2% of the childhood population. Over the past 20 years ASD has not only been increasingly recognized because of clearer diagnostic measures and heightened doctors' awareness, but appears also to be on the rise.

Children with autism, as a group, are considered to be just about the most difficult for parents to handle. Like no other disorder, childhood autism often creates unspeakable pain for parents. Frequent temper tantrums, developmental delay, low frustration tolerance and catastrophic emotional meltdowns are just a few of the factors that knock parents about until they feel punch drunk by the end of each day.

A paper published in the Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics in July 2009, explores the connection between Autoimmune Disorders (AD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). As a Pediatrician and a parent, this new study of nearly 70,000 children in Denmark, interests me greatly. Click on the link below to access the abstract of this article. You can also visit my blog.

Autoimmune Disorders (including Type 1 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and coeliac disease) seem to be associated with ASD. The results of the study show that families affected by an autoimmune condition are more likely to have a child with ASD.

Why? The authors propose two possible reasons:

- common genes for both ASD's and AD's
- circulating maternal antibodies during pregnancy somehow adversely affect the developing foetal brain

The implications and questions are numerous. Will it influence our treatment of Autoimmune Disorders? Should we be more serious about preventing them? What are the implications for parents of children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder? Could it one day be prevented?

Watch this space! I certainly will be.

Research Abstract: <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/122368936/abstract>

Dr Harry's Blog on Autism: <http://okidokiebaby.com/blog/category/autism/>

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