

Research and Media Updates

Groundbreaking scientific study published this week in the peer-reviewed Australasian Journal of Clinical Environmental Medicine warns that wireless communication technology may be responsible for accelerating the rise in autism among the world's children.

...[researcher] Dr George Carlo said, "These findings tie in with other studies showing adverse cell-membrane responses and disruptions of normal cell physiology. The EMR apparently causes the metals to be trapped in cells, slowing clearance and accelerating the onset of symptoms... Our data offer a reasonable mechanistic explanation for a connection between autism and wireless technology."

The authors [of the study] point out that the rise in cases of autism is paralleled by the huge growth in mobile phone and WiFi usage since the late 1990's – with worldwide wireless usage now having reached nearly 4 billion persons.

"Although some of the increase in autism can be ascribed to more efficient diagnosis by the medical community," Dr. Carlo said, "A rise of this magnitude must have a major environmental cause. Our data offer a reasonable mechanistic explanation for a connection between autism and wireless technology."

- ❖ By introducing a gene mutation in mice, investigators have created what they believe to be the first accurate model of autism not associated with a broader neuropsychiatric syndrome, according to research presented at the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology annual meeting.

Q. Handling the Holidays with a Child on the Autism Spectrum

Everyone around me seems to be shopping for holiday toys that mean nothing to my child with autism. I'd like to enjoy the season, but how can I even plan for a holiday with a child who prefers the ribbons on the box to the age-appropriate toys inside? Holiday stress is tough enough, but this is making me crazy.

Answer:

Holidays are often filled with stress. It takes work to make a beautiful and fun holiday for yourself and those around you. There is a lot of pressure to make the holidays perfect and fun, and to enjoy yourself while you're doing it. This is a tall order in any situation, but when you add to that the stress of having a child with special needs for whom you also want the holidays to be perfect and fun, it can become more overwhelming than ever.

Everything needs readjusting in your family life these days, and of course you are left with the emotions of it all. It is on you to make warm experiences for your family and new traditions that will help them to feel good about these family years. It's a huge adjustment. It's important at this time to sit back for a few minutes and backtrack just a little.

What is it about the holidays that you've always enjoyed? Special foods? Pretty decorations? Certain activities? The gifts? All of it? Whatever it is, start there.

Focus on a few things you know are important to make sure you have prepared around this time. Of course, some things may need modification so that it is possible to enjoy them with your child with special needs. For example, if there is a danger of them hurting themselves on fragile decorations you may have to put them higher up and out of reach, or get new ones that are not so fragile. Some special foods may not be able to be served. These modifications often bring us disappointment but if the goal is a nice family holiday, it's important and we can adjust. Make the demands on yourself realistic and don't try to do so much that you feel only frustration. Make realistic lists and work on things one at a time. Looking at a whole month of this holiday season is less overwhelming if you take it in small pieces. You may also have to lower your expectations of what you can really do, but at least what you do will be less stressful and make the holidays special.

Again, you may have to step back and change your expectations. Think about your child and what will put a smile on his/her face. Maybe they can't handle the new games that every other kid is playing this year, or the current popular book series, or new sports equipment. But they may be thrilled with a cushy new ball, a big soft beanbag chair to flop on, a favorite food (within their dietary constraints), or even an hour away from all the noise and confusion to walk in brisk weather or slide in the playground. It's not what you hoped, but this part is not just about you. It's about how you can give everyone in your family some warm holiday experiences, and feel good about them and yourself in the process.

December 2007

➤ The National Lekotek Center recommends the following Top Ten Things to Consider When Buying Toys for Children with Disabilities:

1. Multisensory appeal: Does the toy respond with lights, sounds, or movement? Are there contrasting colors? Does it have a scent? Is there texture?
2. Method of activation: Will the toy provide a challenge without frustration? What is the force required to activate? What are the number and complexity of steps required to activate?
3. Where toy will be used: Can the toy be used in a variety of positions such as side-lying or on wheelchair tray? Will the toy be easy to store? Is there space in the home?
4. Opportunities for success: Can play be open-ended with no definite right or wrong way? Is it adaptable to the child's individual style, ability and pace?
5. Current popularity: Is it a toy most any child would like? Does it tie-in with other activities like T.V., movies, books, clothing, etc?
6. Self-expression: Does the toy allow for creativity, uniqueness, and choice-making? Will it give the child experience with a variety of media?
7. Adjustability: Does it have adjustable height, sound volume, speed, level of difficulty?
8. Child's individual characteristics: Does the toy provide activities that reflect both developmental and chronological ages? Does it reflect the child's interests and age?
9. Safety and durability: Consider the child's size and strength in relation to the toy's durability. Is the toy and its parts sized appropriately? Does the toy have moisture resistance? Can it be washed and cleaned?
10. Potential for interaction: Will the child be an active participant during use? Will the toy encourage social engagement with others?



Company Updates: (WI families)

- ✚ Thank You Rachel Carr, Amy Z. and Lindsay for all the extra work you have been putting in with the file folders. Thank you everyone else who has had part in making file folders as well! The extra work is GREATLY appreciated!
- ✚ The incentive program is still in affect. Therapists will receive FREE gas Cards for attendance. Ask your senior for details.
- ✚ Any therapy done outside of the home needs approval, Contact your senior!

- ✚ Keep hours consistent; only cancel if your client is sick!!!! All hours need to be made up if the therapist cancels!
- ✚ Evals coming in December, all therapists MUST pass the line exam to receive a raise!
- ✚ The holiday party will take part January 16th at 7:00. We will be bowling, eating and having fun! The location to be announced!
- ✚ Timesheets must have signatures from each therapist at the end of the month before turning them in. Please mark if team meetings, community trips or training has occurred next to the date. Thanks!
- ✚ Remember, payroll is on the 10th and the 25th of every month. If one of those dates fall on a holiday or Sunday payroll falls on the next business day.

Joke of the month:

- Q. In which month does Santa Claus eat the least?
A. February; because it's the shortest month!

Stimuli/Resources:

CD Review: "My Healthy Smile"

"My Healthy Smile" is a CD created by the Fraser Child and Family Center in Minneapolis. It's a set of visual social stories, parent tools and professional tip sheets to improve oral health and dental experiences for people with autism.

Website Review: Child-Autism-Parent-Cafe.com

This is a rich, high-quality, well-written website specifically intended for African American families with members on the autism spectrum. While its founder was thinking of African Americans when she created the site, anyone with a child on the spectrum will find outstanding resources here.

Child First Videos

Child First "Able Individual" videos are teaching tools for children on the autism spectrum. They are step-by-step instructions for daily routines such as chores, hygiene, and social interactions.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

December 2007

