

NEW HOPE FOR OVERCOMING AUTISM AND LYME DISEASE

By John C. Pittman, MD and Mark N. Mead, MSc

The tunnel of silence known as autism is among the most heartbreaking and bewildering of childhood disorders. Our experience treating this condition began in the mid-1990s. Since then, we have worked with dozens of infants and children who could not speak or interpret facial expressions. Many never smile, and most engage in frequent spinning, toe walking, or other odd repetitive behaviors. Many can also fixate on a particular object for long periods, seemingly oblivious to the world around them.

For decades, psychiatrists viewed autism as a psychological disorder caused by poor parenting. However, no conclusive evidence ever surfaced to support that view. We now know autism is caused by biological factors, though there is still considerable controversy as to which specific factors are most critical, and exactly how they cause autism and the larger group of neurodevelopmental problems known as Autism Spectrum Disorders, or ASDs.

Nevertheless, our experience, along with medical literature searches and our training at the Autism Research Institute, has confirmed that virtually all children with ASDs show measurable defects in their detoxifying capacity, making them unable to eliminate many brain-toxic factors such as lead, mercury, and pesticides. These kids are also more prone to oxidative stress and to inflammation of brain tissues. Many have immune system weaknesses that render them even more susceptible to harmful bacteria and other microbes and their toxins.

An integrative medicine approach logically targets the problems that are extremely common among children with ASDs, though the mix of problems can vary greatly from one individual to another. These problems include detoxification weaknesses, toxic over-

load, nutritional deficiencies, food and chemical sensitivities and intestinal imbalances.

Children undergoing an integrative approach may show rapid improvement in language and social skills, and improved sleep, mood, and overall disposition. We have seen many progress from having multiple aberrant behaviors to becoming playful, sociable, and communicative. Many have gone from extreme isolation to being mainstreamed in a regular school, often performing just as well as their peers and sometimes even ending up at the top of their class. In many cases the ASD symptoms seem to disappear completely.

High-Level Study and Training

Our approach to ASDs is based on ongoing training and updating of our treatment protocols. Last summer, we participated in an intensive clinical training with Elizabeth Mumper, MD, who serves as Medical Director for the Autism Research Institute, and President and CEO of The Rimland Center for Integrative Medicine in Lynchburg, Virginia. This training focused primarily on the "Defeat Autism Now!" (DAN!) approach to medical evaluation and treatment of children with Autism and ASDs.

More recently we traveled to Baltimore to attend the Autism Research Institute's DAN! Conference. Along with exploring gastrointestinal and metabolic issues affecting children with autism, the professional seminars at this conference provided in-depth information on many clinical aspects of ASDs. Two weeks later, we attended the Autism Society of North Carolina Annual Conference, the largest autism conference in the state.

Another Major Challenge: Overcoming Lyme Disease

Treatment of Lyme and other tick-borne illnesses has emerged as another major focus. Children are increasingly targets of tick-borne organisms. If the illness is treated early, antibiotics can eliminate the infection and its symptoms. If left untreated, later symptoms may involve the joints, heart, and central nervous system. Late, delayed, or inadequate treatment can lead to more serious and even disabling symptoms that can be difficult to treat.

We have seen outstanding results with our integrative approach to both intermediate and advanced cases of Lyme and other tick-borne illnesses. The approach integrates intensive use of antibiotics to treat the *Borrelia* infection and co-infections, along with evidence-based use of therapies and supplements that provide targeted support for the immune, hormonal, and nervous systems—many of which also increase the effectiveness of prescription medications while also helping to reduce painful symptoms and speeding up the recovery process.

On August 20-21, Dr. Pittman will lecture on Lyme disease at an Asheville conference for health care professionals titled "The Nutritional and Biological Integrative Medical Treatment of Diseases." Dr. Pittman is currently president of the North Carolina Integrative Medical Society, the event host. His approach to Lyme is grounded in treatment principles laid out at the 2009 Physician Training Program in Washington D.C., sponsored by the International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society.

The Carolina Center for Integrative Medicine is located at 4505 Fair Meadow Lane, Suite 111 in Raleigh. 919-571-4391. www.carolinacenter.com.