

Doctor urges 3-level plan of treatment

By Heather Warlick
Staff Writer

Contrary to the belief held by many mainstream physicians, Dr. Bryan Jepson and his associates believe much can be done to help autistic children get better.

Jepson, an Austin, Texas, physician, father of an autistic child and specialist in treating autism, said the disorder produces many symptoms. He thinks treating those symptoms can improve the prognosis for the millions of children who have varying degrees of autism.

Jepson recommends a three-tiered approach: replace what the child is missing; remove what is causing harm; and break the inflammatory cycle.

Autism affects people's immune systems, gastrointestinal systems, neurological systems and toxicological systems in an interrelated fashion, he said. But each patient is individual and must be treated according to his or her needs.

"Autism is a very complicated illness, and there are lots of interactions between these complicated systems, so the treatment is likewise complicated," Jepson said. "We target particular interventions and see what helps, and we try to move forward and individualize it for the individual child."

The gut

"Many kids with autism have abnormal bowel patterns," Jepson said. "And sometimes, what was previously looked at as just autistic

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behavior is really a manifestation of discomfort.”

In many of the 1,000 autistic children he has treated, Jepson has found chronic diarrhea, constipation, loose stools and chronic abdominal pain.

“Posturing,” or finding positions that place pressure on the abdomen, is a sign of abdominal pain in autistic children, he said.

In many autistic children, chronic abdominal pain is caused by abnormal conditions in the bowel, including extreme inflammation, leaky gut syndrome (a condition in which the membrane surrounding the intestines leaks toxins into the child’s system) and overgrowth of harmful bacteria, parasites and yeast.

By treating the bowel problems in autistic children, Jepson said, many of the physical and behavioral traits common to autistic children can be improved. Those traits include tantrums, abdominal pain, diarrhea and constipation. Dietary changes, including eliminating gluten and casein, also can be helpful in treating gut problems related to autism, he said.

The brain

Bowel abnormalities can cause an autistic person to retain toxins. Heavy metals such as mercury, aluminum, arsenic, copper and lead are also known to be toxic and can lead to a decline in mental, cognitive and physical health of people with autism. These substances are commonly used in medical, household and industrial products.

Registered nurse Maureen McDonnell said bowel problems and environmental toxins can have the same effect as drugs on the brains of autistic children. She said toxins can create an opiate effect, which explains the loss of language and attention skills.

“Just think of it, if you were sitting around smoking opium, you would be disconnected from your environment, too. You would be missing social cues, and you would be acting bizarre. So when you remove the sources of that opium effect on the brain, you see a much clearer child emerge,” she said.

By treating the gut problems and detoxifying autistic patients, McDonnell and Jepson said, many neurological problems can be alleviated. But such detoxification must be done under supervision of a physician, experts say.

The immune system

People with autism also commonly have immunological disorders such as frequent ear infections, inflamed lymph nodes, diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis. They are prone to inflammation and auto-immune reactions and are inefficient at dealing with infections, Jepson wrote.

By addressing nutritional deficiencies, removing immunological triggers and breaking the inflammatory cycle of the immune system, doctors can improve the health of autistic patients, he said.

However, autistic people are commonly picky eaters, making it difficult to improve their nutritional health, Jepson said. It is essential that they receive enough of vitamins A, B1, B2, B3, B6, B12, C, D and K, minerals zinc, magnesium and calcium, and omega-3 fatty acids, he said.

Autistic children also have abnormal cellular biochemistry that causes abnormal enzyme function, which prevents use of nutrients. It is important not to give a child too much vitamins D, E, K and A, as they are fat soluble and will build up in the body, possibly causing more harm than good, he said.

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