



Tue 5 Sep 2006

## Treatment with 'friendly' bacteria could counter autism in children

IAN JOHNSTON SCIENCE CORRESPONDENT

PROBIOTIC bacteria given to autistic children improved their concentration and behaviour so much that medical trials collapsed because parents refused to accept placebos, a scientist revealed yesterday.

The effect of the bacteria was so pronounced that some of the parents taking part in what was supposed to be a blind trial realised their children were taking something other than a placebo.

A number then refused to give their children the placebo when they were due to switch, resulting in the collapse of the trial.

Glenn Gibson, a microbiologist who ran the study of 40 autistic children aged between four and eight, said this meant it was difficult to draw any firm conclusions and he is planning to carry out further research.

However, he said parents had told him the probiotic bacteria was having a beneficial effect, resulting in "better concentration and better behaviour".

One parent said it was "heartbreaking" to have to stop their child taking it.

"It was really challenging for us and the parents. I'd really like to go back to it and do it in a better way, with perhaps more professional help from people who know how to deal with autistic children," said Prof Gibson.

"The trial ultimately failed because of the large number of drop-outs. About half the kids dropped out. Some of the parents worked out their child was on the test and didn't want to move on to the placebo."

Autistic children often suffer bowel conditions and Prof Gibson said a previous study had found high levels of a "bad" bacteria called clostridia in the gut.

The probiotic was then designed to reduce the levels of clostridia and promote "friendly" bacteria instead to see what effect this would have.

Prof Gibson, from Reading University, said the children appeared to show fewer signs of autism when taking the probiotic supplement, which was given in a powder once a day.

"Very subjectively, we asked the parents to fill in diaries about the mood of the children. We got very positive feedback generally," he said.

He said that certain kinds of clostridia produced neuro- toxins, which potentially could be the cause of autism or a contributory factor.

However, he said this was speculation and the apparent improvement could also simply be because the children had felt better.

"If your gut is not behaving yourself, you feel rough," Prof Gibson said.

Ads by Google

### [Autism Certificate](#)

Professional Development from Penn State

Online

[worldcampus.PSU.edu](http://worldcampus.PSU.edu)

### [Autism & Speech](#)

Unlock your child's potential for language &amp; help kids learn to talk

[www.BabyBumbleBee.com](http://www.BabyBumbleBee.com)

### [Aspergers Syndrome Remedy](#)

Diagnosis &amp; drug free treatment for Aspergers.

Free online test &amp; DVD

[www.dore.com.au](http://www.dore.com.au)

The first bacteria in the gut is received from the mother during birth and then comes from the outside environment, with diet playing an important role.

"They [infants] may be under medication for an infection and that may have an effect," Prof Gibson said.

"There are all sorts of different factors that may affect that [the bacterial make-up of the gut]."

There was a scare over widely discredited claims that autism was linked to the MMR - measles, mumps and rubella - vaccine given to children.

Asked whether he thought childhood vaccines could have an effect, Prof Gibson said: "No. I don't think there is anything in this MMR business at all."

It is estimated that 535,000 people in the UK have some kind of autism, including a milder form called Asperger's Syndrome.

The condition affects four times as many boys as girls for reasons that are not clearly understood.

A spokeswoman for the National Autistic Society (NAS), the UK's leading charity for people with the condition and their families, said it followed new research into possible treatments with great interest.

She went on: "There is anecdotal evidence that certain vitamins and diets do have benefits for some people with autism. However, a great deal more research remains to be done in this area.

"The NAS looks forward to seeing the results of the further research that Professor Gibson hopes to conduct in the future."

She said that "rigorous scientific evaluation" was necessary to gauge the effects of any new treatment.

A whole range of therapies had been tried in the past, from medication and behavioural therapy to aromatherapy and swimming with dolphins, with varying degrees of success.

## Related topic

- [Autism](http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=702)  
<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=702>

**This article:** <http://news.scotsman.com/uk.cfm?id=1308572006>

**Last updated:** 04-Sep-06 00:27 BST

## Comments

1. **Paul Voltaire** / 10:31am 5 Sep 2006

I am quite relieved to know there are friendly bacteria around. They are welcome in my fridge any day

2. **ANGUS**, Oban West Coast Of Scotland / 1:05pm 5 Sep 2006

Started to go in the right way this study.No suprise like many others it was stopped and the parents blamed as normal.What you have to ask is how is the gut of these children is such a flux of imbalance,Mercury damage and its the biggest kept secret in the west.

MMR R.I.P.

3. **barrie**, newbury / 5:34pm 5 Sep 2006

The growing connection between gut function and generated toxins suggests there is a whole lot of stuff not dreamed of by Horatio. Where bacteria mediate, the most targeted and potentially benign therapy is via phages, but in UK the back-pressure from drug money is causing government to drag its feet.

4. **Michael Jozefiak**, Norfolk, England / 10:33pm 5 Sep 2006

Very good article Ian. It is high time the so-called 'civilised world's' approach to illness was given a complete check up from the neck up. If our bodies are absorbing polutants and chemicals (medicines), small wonder it's wobbling on its gimbals!

In my view the biggest scandal in recent times, apart from our nutritionally depleted food, is the refusal of the UK NHS to allow phage therapy to alleviate the suffering of thousands of patients annually. Phages are totally benign and don't ruin the body's immune system like antibiotics do e.g. Clostridium Difficile is a consequence of antibiotic treatment.

More power to those parents who refused to play 'the game' with their children. Time to act and to stop this eternal 'Holy Grail' quest for proof that eating good food is good for your health. We're not stupid - we know it works! How ever did we survive all these millions of years without scientists!

5. **Paula Stepankowsky**, Longview, Wash., USA / 4:49pm 6 Sep 2006

This study in the UK bolsters long-standing research in the US that shows a connection between gut dysfunction and symptoms of autism. Why this is the case needs further research, of course. You are in error to state that the link between the MMR and autism is widely discredited. In fact, new and continuing research in the U.S. is raising further questions about a possible link between the live MMR virus as a trigger for gut dysbiosis in children genetically predisposed to autism and related disorders.

6. **Alyson**, Dallas, Texas / 5:07pm 6 Sep 2006

We sponsored a study last year with a probiotic, using two medical doctors who supervised 17 autistic children in the US, Canada, Japan and the UK. The results are on the following website: [www.autism-study.com](http://www.autism-study.com) for those who are interested.

7. **Peter**, Tasmania / 6:13am 7 Sep 2006

Hi Professor, any chance the food industry could distribute this aid to parents who struggle to cope with autistic kids. I am no expert, but they already distribute probiotic drinks. Would another one that helped those kids, and their parents really destroy the world?

8. **David**, London, UK / 10:46am 7 Sep 2006

Time and time again we see studies about how to FIX children with Autism, this is endemic when parents have never got over the diagnosis of their child's Autism. This has also led to a whole range of "quack" fixes from "special vitamins" to the tragic use of "Chelation" therapy which killed Abubakar Tariq Nadama aged 5 in August 2005. Confused parents of autistic children are now preyed upon by organisations trying to sell them one remedy after another, usually leading to the chelation sell. There is even one such company masquerading as a charity here in the UK.

Sadly what most people fail to realise is that Autistic children are actually developing albeit at a different rate to neurotypical children. All children develop in random ways; some develop physically first, other emotionally first and others intellectually first. This renders these studies useless because the chances are that these children would have developed in the same way without the medication, yogurt, oil or whatever.

I am not discounting the important of diet, in my area around 50% of the parents of profoundly autistic children improved behaviour by restricting Gluten. However, this is also the case for neurotypical children, hence Jamie's schools dinners.

As a parent of an autistic child I find it sad that others have not yet come to terms with their child's diagnosis. For this I have to thank the National Autistic Society and their Earlybird Plus programme, which we attended this every Friday for three months. We met other parents of autistic children and learned the strategies for dealing and coping with all the difficulties an autistic child presents.

As exhausting as it is to care for our child there is a purity and innocence often lacking in other children, our love for her is so profound I am not sure we would change her even if we could.

People need to stop trying to FIX our autistic children and start learning to tolerate those that are DIFFERENT in our society. Parents have to get over the diagnosis so that they can start focusing on how to help their autistic children, they face a long a hard battle to get the services they need from Education, Social Services and the Health Service. Campaigns such as Make School Make Sense (MSMS) have helped increase awareness but there is a lot of work to do. Even the NAS admits it is only managing to help one in four families affected by autism.

All we have to do to find out if the massive rise in Autism was caused by the mercury in the vaccines given to babies is WAIT. Vaccines with Thimerosal (Mercury) were ceased in the UK in October 2004, so after October 2007 we should start seeing some reduction IF that was a factor.

NAS-[www.nas.org.uk](http://www.nas.org.uk)

Earlybird-<http://tinyurl.com/mbeeu>

MSMS-<http://www.nas.org.uk/msms>

9. **chris**, chateulin france / 4:54pm 7 Sep 2006

Autism is or was a very rare problem for a few youngsters and their parents.

Those children who are unlucky enough to be genetically, environmentally, chemically or physically weakened through stimuli only need a trigger to bring on the onset of a problem such as Autism.

After many years of testing, "Thalidomide" was proven to be safe by regulatory bodies resulting in massive problems for many until it was withdrawn. It has now been found to have uses that are evidentially positive, but I fear in the race to get new drugs licensed and patented, studies are not large enough and the results are not independently assessed and the risk assessments could possibly be better.

It is good to see that Paula mentions that studies in the States are showing the high possibility/probability that MMR could be one of the major stimulants resulting in Autism.

Is it possible that MMR changes the conditions within the gut, making that environment alien to the bacteria and fungi we rely on so greatly for the correct digestion of quality foods.

There are many treatments that can be used but are regularly disregarded by what we know as

modern medicine. In fact most of the promoters of modern medicine will have been treated when young successfully by their grandparents using methods that were known to work and are now disregarded. These traditional methods usually require a more dedicated and experienced person for the best results.

I believe the real key is not to use the "One stop shop" treatment but to use the appropriate treatment required for the wellbeing and recovery of the individual.

There is an absolute place for surgery, antibiotics and modern medicine.

There also is an absolute place for the use of traditional medicines on a constitutional basis from acupuncture, homoeopathy, structural mobilisation, phages etc..

At least they have a track record of thousands of years rather than sixty.

Chris Pearson GNP

[Add your comment](#)

To post a comment you will first need to [log in](#) or [register](#).

---

Ads by Google

**[Help For Autism](#)**

Autism's underlying causes and what you can do to reverse autism.  
[Health-Reports.com](#)

**[Autism Asperger Books etc](#)**

Australian & Imported Resources Available now all over Australia  
[www.bookinhand.com.au](#)

**[Autism - Herbal Remedies](#)**

Information, support and natural remedies with guaranteed results.  
[www.nativeremedies.com](#)

---