

Link between autism and MMR vaccine again

Medical Studies/Trials

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The possible link between the MMR inoculation and autism will be raised yet again this week in a presentation that claims to provide proof.

The combination vaccine of measles, mumps and rubella is given to young children and is widely supported by the medical profession. According to the American researchers their study supports the findings of Dr. Andrew Wakefield, the discredited gastroenterologist who first raised fears that the MMR injection might be causing autism.

Following Dr. Wakefield suggestions that the MMR should be avoided in favour of single vaccinations uptake of the vaccine decreased sharply.

His research which was published in [The Lancet](#) in 1998, had apparently detected traces of the measles virus in the guts of 12 children with autism. This latest study, led by Arthur Krigsman, of the [New York University School of Medicine](#), involved 275 children and the researchers say that serious intestinal inflammations were found in some of the autistic children.

Biopsies of gut tissue were performed on 82 of the children and 70 are said to have shown evidence of the measles virus, which so far has been confirmed in 14 cases by more stringent DNA tests.

According to Steve Walker, assistant professor at [Wake Forest University Medical Centre](#), North Carolina, who analysed the gut samples, the work mirrored Dr Wakefield's study.

All of the children involved were diagnosed with autism and had seemingly gone to Dr. Krigsman and Dr. Walker seeking help for symptoms of serious digestive problems for which no explanation could be found. The idea of a link between MMR and autism has been repeatedly tossed around in mainstream science and no evidence has ever been found to support it.

Supporters of the theory are often accused of interpreting two biological occurrences as a causative relationship that does not exist.

The uptake of MMR, which was introduced into Britain in 1988, has improved in recent years, but remains as low as 70 per cent in the wake of ongoing questioning of its possible side-effects.

The [World Health Organisation](#) recommends 95 per cent coverage, and the shortfall has been blamed for contributing to rising rates of measles and mumps in recent years.

A recent analysis of 31 MMR studies by the [Cochrane Library](#), one of the most authoritative sources of evidence-based medicine, showed no credible grounds for claims of serious harm.

The research, which is being presented at the International Meeting for Autism Research in Montreal this week, has yet to be published in a scientific journal and subjected to peer review.