

Genes, Genes – the Grant Funding Machines

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by [Anne Dachel](#), [Age of Autism](#)

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Baylor College School of Medicine in Houston recently announced that their researchers have identified genetic mutations ‘linked to autism.’

This research was covered by KHOU TV Houston in the story, [1 in 54 kids diagnosed with Autism, Baylor researchers studying why.](#)

Actually they aren’t.

I’m sure the grant money for this study came with the stipulation that they stick to the script that autism is a genetic disorder lots of unfortunate children are born with. It’s important that autism busywork like this continues so the public thinks that the medical community cares about autism.

How do I know this?

Everything in the piece is meant to downplay the health and humanitarian disaster that autism represents. Reporter Lauren Talarico provides the blanket definition that understates any of the horrific symptoms children and families have to live with:

Autism is a neuro-developmental disorder. It can affect speech, social interactions and the ability to communicate.

(No mention of parents changing the diapers on their non-verbal young adult son who wears a helmet because he bangs his

head on the wall endlessly.)

Likewise there are no words like *crisis* or *epidemic* used. Instead Dr. Olivier Lichtarge, professor of molecular and human genetics, uses phrases like 'a surprisingly large number of children' to describe two percent of U.S. kids with autism.

While we are told that one in 54 children are now diagnosed with autism, there is not one word about the unstoppable increases that have preceded it: 2004: one in 166, 2007: one in 150, 2009: one in 110, 2012: one in 88, 2014: one in 68, 2018: one in 59, (also in 2018: one in 40 according to a separate study published in JAMA), one in 54, 2020.

Somehow Lichtarge thinks that looking for mutating genes will matter when the rate eventually reaches one in 10, one in 5.

Lichtarge shows no embarrassment over the complete failure of the scientific/medical community to figure out anything significant about autism despite billions of dollars in research funding and 20 years of trying.

This is how lost they are:

More and more children are being diagnosed with [Autism Spectrum Disorder \(ASD\)](#), and researchers are trying to figure out why.

"It is a rising fraction for reasons we do not understand," Dr. Lichtarge said.

Doctors are not sure what causes it.

"The basis of autism is not quite clear. It's obviously genetic. It also may have an environmental interplay,"

"There is every reason to hope that we can understand it better in the near future," he said.

Lichtarge cleverly sidesteps the issue of an environmental

trigger that marks these genetically susceptible kids for lifelong damage with the singular, vague mention of 'an environmental interplay.' Yet this is something he has no interest in exploring.

And don't think the horrific number of one in 54 kids matters really. Notice the phrase is "1 in 54 kids **diagnosed** with Autism," not 1 in 54 kids with autism.

This is a neat way of saying that the rate may be the result of "better diagnosing" and it's has used for two decades as the catch phrase to mean that more kids don't actually have autism. They've always been here; **more are being diagnosed.**

No one wants to prevent autism

We are told that the endgame of identifying those "*harmful mutations...linked to autism*" is merely so "*scientists can develop the best treatments.*"

All in all, there are no findings here that will help a single child.

Talarico also fails to ask why Lichtarge isn't interested in adults with autism and looking at their genetics and their treatment plans.

Of course Lichtarge won't have a problem finding kids to study; they're on every block and in every school. Too bad he doesn't want to use some of his funding to look for the elusive one in 54 adults with autism..

Predictably the photo accompanying the piece show a cute smiling girl painting a paper covered with colorful puzzle pieces. And thus it will remain: the eternal mystery of autism, the puzzle no one wants to solve.

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