

Vail Daily

Vail Natural Health: Looking at possible causes of autism

Vail Natural Health: Prevalence of autism has been rising since 1987

AUGUST, 31 2009

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Autism and ADHD are now more common than measles and whooping cough. The prevalence of autism has been rising since 1987; the Center of Disease Control's ASD prevalence reports released in February 2007 issue of the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report Surveillance Summaries show that it now affects 1 in 150 8-year-olds in the U.S. CDC also reports that over 4 million children nationwide now qualify for a diagnosis of ADHD (www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5434a2.htm).

A simple definition of autism is a combination of social deficits, problems with eye contact, the give and take of social interactions, narrow interests, repetitive behaviors, rigid routines and language-based difficulties.

In 1990, autism was diagnosed in about 4.7 out of every 10,000 American children. By the end of 2006, that number had risen to approximately 60 out of every 10,000. Theories abound about the causes of autism and ADHD such as low birth weight and premature delivery, viral infections, vaccines, sugar, psychological trauma, too much TV, and a newly-discovered genetic mutation associated with autism. We do not know what really causes autism, in fact, there may be many different etiologies.

A current theory focuses on the fact that most children with brain disorders have medicated hospital births in common. A recent study in the May 2009 issue of *Ob/Gyn & Women's Health* states that brain injuries in children may be due to the aggressive use of epidurals and Pitocin in labor and delivery. The increase in autism diagnoses neatly parallels the push for "active management" of labor with epidurals and Pitocin. Around 65 percent of births in the U.S. are managed with epidural analgesia. Epidurals are narcotics. Babies born under epidurals are susceptible to fetal distress – lowered heart rates and lack of oxygen, a primary cause of brain damage. The narcotics also cause dysfunctional contractions and lax pelvic floor muscles, which slow labor's progress.

Another theory states that vaccinations containing mercury can be a cause of autism. However, an analysis of data from a California database shows that the number of autism cases continued to increase after the ethylmercury-containing preservative thimerosal was eliminated from most childhood vaccines, according to a report in the January 2009 issue of the *Archives of General Psychiatry*. Current studies show that vaccinations are not the cause of autism. Children today get 30 vaccinations by the time they are two years old. There has never been a study comparing children who haven't been vaccinated with children who have. Therefore, there is no way of really knowing if vaccinations are a problem.

A study in *Environmental Health Perspective* in 2007 suggests that there is a link between maternal exposure to commercially applied organochlorine pesticides and subsequent risk of autism in their children. This study reported that pregnant mothers who lived in the California Central Valley close to fields where organochlorine pesticides were being applied had an increased risk of giving birth to a child with autistic spectrum disorder.

There are many different factors that have been implicated as possible causes of autism, therefore not all children may have the same etiology of autism. Treatment protocols should include looking at possible toxic exposure, allergies, brain chemical pathways deficiencies, genetic defects, infections and nutritional deficiencies. Each patient needs to be treated on an individual basis.

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