

## **CNN Report on Autism**

National Report Reveals 273% Increase in ASD

Recently CNN reported on the dramatic increase of autism spectrum disorders in California. The reports covered several different facets of the concerns parents and educators.

CNN reported that in California, the only state that apparently keeps official records on autism populations, autism has increased 273% between 1987 and 1998. It brings to mind a world where parents and grandparents cannot recall ever knowing anyone who was autistic or had an autistic child to a world where it seems that nearly every family has been touched by this disorder.

One parent, who is also a lobbyist for autism, had some comments on what living with autism is like. "It's a living hell. For my son who suffers from the disorder, for our family members and everyone who knows and loves (him). It's a constant struggle." CNN noted that this parent believes the MMR vaccine is involved in the cause of autism. They also took note and reported on the controversy about vaccines by quoting from the Danish study that concluded there was no connection between ASD and immunizations. They also reported on the M.I.N.D. Institute's study that stated that the increase in autism is due to population growth and better testing. Reporting in this case brought all the questions and controversy to the table. Unfortunately it was unable to produce any answers.

Paula Zahn's interview with Bernard Rimland discussed the issue of vaccinations as the potential trigger. Dr. Rimland stated that he believes that vaccines are heavily involved in the epidemic and that children are now exposed to 22 vaccinations before the age of 2. In the 1960's the number was only three vaccinations. His belief is that children are unable to process and detoxify the heavy metals introduced into their system. In this case the metal is mercury, which is found in the form of thimerosal in vaccines. He also stated he believed there is a genetic component that causes some children to "retreat into autism" and others to not have any reaction at all.

Dr. Rimland said that it is important to not use any vaccinations containing mercury. Although it has been removed from the products in production there are still vaccination supplies that are in storage and are being used that contain thimerosal. He also said no child should receive vaccinations if their immune system is compromised, as when they have a cold or other illness. He also felt waiting until a child is older is a safer plan if vaccinations will be used.

The interview then went to Sanjay Gupta, M.D. He is a neurosurgeon who is in active medical practice and is familiar with the research and different studies on autism. His opinion was that Dr. Rimland brought up some very good issues but that although thimerosal had been removed from vaccines for children in 1999, there was no evidence to be certain that it was the cause or even the trigger. His recommendation? Continue with vaccinations as the diseases they prevent far outweigh the risks.

According to parents of autistic children, "Autism has been for far too long the "step-child" of special needs disorders. It has almost been swept under the carpet in many places." It is a diagnosis many doctors are unwilling to give, many parents are

unwilling to accept and many in society in general don't even understand. Yet it grows.

According to the CNN report, it grew 273% in an 11-year period in the state of California. According to proponents of more studies for autism spectrum disorder, "If those rates applied to any other illness, it would be considered a national emergency!" By parents and caretakers of autistic citizens, it seems that the medical and pharmaceutical industry view these increases as completely acceptable.

Due to the report made by CNN perhaps more people than ever before are aware of this disorder.

We do not have to agree on what the cause is. We do not have to argue and debate endlessly on if it is vaccinations, diet, genetics or what star was in which quadrant that day. It doesn't matter for those in the trenches that deal with autism and the other related disorders on a daily basis. What matters is that people who are in the autism community unite together so that research can be done to find the answers.

For many it is more important to find out what has caused this 273% percent increase and how to can stop it. It is important that to find the best treatment for each child because very very soon these children will be adults and society will be impacted by these very high numbers of people with autism.

It is important for parents. And it is important for those with autism spectrum disorder.