



JULY 2016

PARENT NEWSLETTER

From the Autism Spectrum Disorder Department at Easterseals Joliet Region

Visit our [website](#) or find us on [Facebook](#)

What's Going On At Easterseals....

Parents Raising Children with ASDs

Our parent support group continues to meet the **second Wednesday of every month from 6:00 – 7:30**. This program is very well attended and it is a wonderful way to meet other parents, get information and get connected to resources in your community. This month we will meet on **Wednesday, July 13th** and as always, childcare will be provided for those who sign up ahead of time by Easter Seals staff. Both the group and childcare are free of charge. Please contact Laura Wallace with any questions or to register for childcare at lwallace@joliet.easterseals.com or 815-927-5466.

Volunteer at Easterseals

Easterseals Joliet Region is looking for volunteers! There are a variety of opportunities from helping out in our summer programming, working in our child care center, or just helping out around the building. Volunteers must be 18 years or older. For more information and to sign up, click the link!

<http://www.easterseals.com/joliet/get-involved/volunteer/>

Fall Social Skills Groups for 3 & 4 year olds

Hard to believe it, but summer therapy groups are wrapping up and soon it will be time to head back to school! Our school year social skills groups will be starting with Session I in September for 3 and 4 year olds. Days and times to be announced in next month's newsletter.

At Easterseals we run three different 8 week social skills sessions over the course of the school year. Social skills groups are led by our experienced Autism department staff to target specific social deficits that are common in children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other social/emotional delays. We focus on practicing skills during class by creating social opportunities and then we provide detailed hand outs so parents can carry over the skills into their home and community. If you are interested in getting more information or signing up please contact the program coordinator, Valerie Lentz at 815-927-5465 or vlentz@joliet.easterseals.com



SLAMMERS

PRESENTS

GUNS AND HOSES



Come and watch members of the Joliet Police & Fire Departments in our annual charity softball game benefiting Easterseals Joliet! Game tickets good for Guns & Hoses and the Slammers game.

Tickets are \$10 with \$5 per ticket going back to Easterseals.

To buy tickets: visit jolietlammers.com/tickets and use the promo code **SEALS**, or call the box office at (815) 651-2037.

JULY 29th

2016

GUNS & HOSES: Starts at 5:00pm Gates open at 4:30.

Slammers game to follow at 7:00



easterseals
Joliet Region

33rd Annual “Kids Klassic” Easterseals Golf Outing

Come join us on **Wednesday August 3, 2016** for the 33rd Annual “Kids Klassic” Easterseals Golf Outing! Our annual golf outing will be at Old Oak Country Club in Homer Glen. Golf 18 holes followed by a dinner buffet with a silent auction and raffles! If you are not a golfer or cannot join us for the whole day, we invite you to join us at 3:30pm for cocktails and dinner. The proceeds from this wonderful event go directly to support children’s services at Easter Seals Joliet Region. Call the development office at 815-730-2052 or go to our website at www.joliet.easterseals.com for more information or to purchase tickets.



Chat with a Therapist

Our monthly Chat with a Therapist sessions are on break for summer, but we will be back in September with more amazing topics and talented therapists. Please send in any suggestions for chat sessions you’d love to see next year!

What's Going On In Your Community...

Workshops & Resource Fairs

Will County Back to School Fair

Sponsored by Catholic Charities, the Back to School Fair is a one stop event of health & human services for low-income families with children ages newborn to 18 years, living in Will County. Accessible for guests with disabilities. Spanish interpreters will be available. **On Thursday August 4th from 11:00 – 6:00** at 1550 W. Plainfield Rd in Joliet. Families can receive school physicals, dental exams, lead screenings, basic haircuts, developmental screenings, school supplies and information on housing, financial assistance and other community resources. All family members must have identification, proof of income and proof of address within Will County. No registration required. Contact Catholic Charities’ Daybreak Center at (815) 774-HOME by July 29, 2016 for more information.

Kankakee and Iroquois County Back to School Fair

Sponsored by Catholic Charities, the Back to School Fair is a one stop event of health & human services for low-income families with children ages newborn to 18 years, living in either Kankakee or Iroquois Counties. **On Saturday July 30th from 10:30 – 4:00** at Olivet Nazarene University’s Chalfant Hall. Families can receive school physicals, dental exams, health screenings, basic haircuts, developmental screenings, school supplies and information on housing, financial assistance and other

community resources. Pre-registration and appointments for medical services required. Call Catholic Charities at 815-933-7791 ext. 9904 for more information and to register.

Service Animals Webinar

The Great Lakes Americans with Disabilities Act National Network is sponsoring a **FREE** online webinar on **Wednesday July 20th from 1:00-2:30pm** CST. During this session we will cover the federal law and provide a sampling of the state law regarding service animals and assistance/emotional support animals in public settings, housing, and transportation. To register, click the link!

<https://adata.org/event/heavy-petting-ada-service-animals-emotional-support-animals-pets-and-law>

Preventing Parent Burnout Webinar

Parent to parent of New York State presents a webinar on Preventing Parent Burnout for Parents of Children with Special Needs. Join this **FREE** Webinar and discover positive ways to cope with and effectively manage stress on **Wednesday July 13th from 11am to 12pm**. Please be advised that only the first 100 participants who log on will be able to attend! For more information and to register, go to

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8815374432216457473>

Recreational & Social Opportunities

Play For All

On **Saturday July 9th at 9:00am**, the Chicago Children's Museum will open and host Play For All: For Families with Children with Disabilities. The museum invites children and families with disabilities to come and experience CCM's playful, multisensory exhibits for a special private hour inside the museum. Play for All Families are welcome to stay and continue exploring the museum all day. **The first 250 visitors to register receive FREE admission.** Pre-registration is required. This is held every second Saturday of the month. For more information and to register, go to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/july-2016-play-for-all-for-families-with-children-with-disabilities-tickets-25601626153>



National Park Passes

Did you know that children and adults with permanent disabilities in the United States are entitled to **FREE LIFETIME PASSES** to all National Parks, wildlife refuges, and many National forests? The pass also includes three fellow passengers in a car. To apply for your pass, go to

http://store.usgs.gov/pass/access_pass_application.pdf

13th Annual Disability Parade

On **July 23rd**, the City of Chicago celebrates the American's with Disability Act. The parade starts heading West on Van Buren to Dear born street at **11:00am**. For more information and the parade route, go to <http://www.disabilityprideparade.com/>

Shorewood Crossroads Festival – Special Needs Day

Windy City Amusements is sponsoring Shorewood Crossroad's Festival 5th annual **FREE** special needs event on **Friday, August 5th, from 1:00pm to 3:00pm**. This event will be designed for families with special needs, wheelchairs, crowd issues, and noise issues. The rides will be slowed down a bit,

lights and music will be turned off and “friends for the day” will be provided to lend a helping hand to the families. Reserve your spot and **FREE** T-shirt! **Register by July 23rd, 2016.**

<http://www.crossroadsfest.com/#!special-needs-event/clwnm>

Special Needs Nights at Centennial Beach

Families with individuals with special needs are invited to enjoy a quiet, relaxing evening after regular operating hours at Centennial Beach (500 W. Jackson Avenue) in Naperville on **Sunday, July 17th and 31st from 6:30 p.m. until 8 p.m.** It is open to all ages and costs \$3 per person. No registration is required and more information is available at www.napervilleparks.org

Channahon Three Rivers Festival Special Needs Day

The Three Rivers Festival is hosting a **FREE** special needs day as part of their festivities on **Wednesday, August 10th from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.** **Registration is required** by Friday August 5th to Patty Eggen (815-725-4630 or pattyeggen@riverstonefa.com . There will be swimming with a lift available, from 10 a.m. until 11 a.m., complimentary lunch from McDonald’s and TCBY (cheeseburger, potato chips, apple slices, TCBY, water, and soda), and then carnival rides until 2p.m.

Six Flags Autism Awareness Day

Saturday, July 23rd Six Flags Great America will be hosting their Seventh Annual Autism Awareness Day. They have a designated quiet area that provides sensory activities and special Autism Awareness Day Picnic tickets are also available to purchase online. Admission tickets and meal tickets can be purchased in advance from sixflags.com and entering the **promo code AUTISM**. Entry tickets with the Promo code are \$33. Visit this link for more information!

<https://www.sixflags.com/greatamerica/special-events/special-group-event/autism-awareness-day>



Humana Rock N’ Roll Half Marathon

Autism Speaks and Team Up! Has created a team for the Chicago Marathon! They are only allotted a certain number of teammates and spots are given on a first come first serve basis. You can be placed in the lottery to secure your own entry for a **\$25 membership** with no fundraising minimum. The run isn’t until **October 9th** so it’s not too late to start training! Click the link for more information!

<http://events.autismspeaks.org/teamupchicago2016/>

Exploration Station Special Needs Nights

The Exploration Station is a wonderful hands-on children’s museum in Bourbonnais. Families of children with special needs are invited to join the museum on the first Sunday of every month from **11am-12:30pm**. The fee is \$3.50 per person, \$2.50 for residents, and free for members. Pre-registration is required by the Friday before the program date. This is a great opportunity to network with other families. This next special family time will be on **Sunday, August 2nd**. Call (815)993-9905 ext. 3 or register at

<https://register1.vermontsystems.com/wbwsc/ilbourbonnais.wsc/search.html?BeginDate=07/01/2016&>

[BeginMonth=7&BeginYear=2016&date=07/01/2016&EndDate=07/31/2016&location=&Module=Event&SessionID=8415631a-c91b-bab0-1114-68f9f4cb383f&type=](http://www.glasa.org/special-events/twilight-5k/)

9th Annual Twilight 5K

GLASA will host their 9th Annual 5k Run, Walk & Roll and Post-Race Party **on Saturday, August 13th**. This is one of the largest CARA certified races in the Chicago-land area serving competitive and recreational runners and athletes with disabilities. This race takes place at 5pm at the Gorton Center in Lake Forest, IL. Registration is \$35 before August 1st and \$40 after August 1st. For more information and to register, go to

<http://www.glasa.org/special-events/twilight-5k/>

Chicago Disability Expo

On **Wednesday July 13th from 10am-5pm**, the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities is hosting their 2016 AccessChicago event! This is the perfect event for people of all ages and disabilities. This **FREE** one of a kind event will allow you to test products and connect with community organizations to learn about disability-related social services and you can participate in a variety of recreational opportunities! AccessChicago takes place at Navy Pier in Festival Hall A. Click the link for more information

http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/mopd/supp_info/AccessChicagoEventPage.html

Sensory Friendly Films at AMC

Once a month, AMC Theatres presents the Sensory Friendly Film program, which provides a special opportunity for families to enjoy their favorite films in a safe and accepting environment. The auditoriums dedicated to the program have their lights up, the sound turned down and audience members are invited to get up and dance, walk, shout or sing! The next showing is **Saturday, July 9th at 10:00 a.m. of The Secret Life of Pets. The BFG will also be playing Tuesday, July 12th at 7:00pm.** Go to <http://www.amctheatres.com/programs/sensory-friendly-films> for more information and to find a nearby theater that is participating in this great program!



Merchant Street Art Gallery of Artists with Autism

Merchant Street Art Gallery of Artists with Autism is a national, non-profit exhibition space for notable artists and musicians that have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. As one of three galleries in the nation that promote artists with Autism, they focus on empowering artists as well as advancing their careers by displaying high-quality works of art to the public and by setting a positive example to others diagnosed with Autism interested in pursuing the arts. Located at 356 Merchant Street in Kankakee, Illinois they offer gallery viewings, art classes and family events. Visit their [website](#) to find out more!

Therapy Resources

Ready, Set, Ride

Located in Plainfield, Illinois, students as young as three come from all over the Chicagoland area. It is the goal of Ready Set Ride to assist these children in achieving the highest quality of life possible

through the use of horses and individualized activities focused on the needs of the student. Parents are always welcome and encouraged to participate in therapy sessions. Volunteers are also an integral part of the therapy sessions at Ready Set Ride.

Following Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) guidelines, Ready Set Ride bases its program on developmental techniques utilizing the horses as a means of mobility for the children. Certified therapeutic riding instructors guide the students and closely monitor individual needs to encourage consistent improvement. Therapy is conducted in the form of games on horseback which incorporates physical, speech, occupational, developmental, and recreational therapy.

Articles of the Month

Heartwarming photo series turns kids with special needs into superheroes

“The Superhero Project”



One mom's mission to make her son feel strong and powerful after two heart surgeries turned into a touching photo series on the unlimited potential of special-needs kids. "The Superhero Project" features photos of special-needs kids dressed up in costumes to show off their inner superhero.

Renee Bergeron, is the mom and a professional photographer who created "The Superhero Project." She said the goal of the series is to help special-needs children feel confident and strong while raising awareness about children with disabilities.

“The Superhero Project was inspired by my own little super hero, Apollo. Apollo was born with a rare congenital heart defect that wasn’t diagnosed for 18 months. In 2012 Apollo had two heart surgeries and a feeding tube placed. It was a rough year for him and hard on his body. He didn’t like the surgeries, hospital stays, or feeding tube now stuck out of his stomach. One day, I dressed him up as a super hero to take a few fun pictures.” Bergeron photographed him shirtless to help him to feel proud of the tube, rather than self-conscious. Without much thought, she turned him into a little superhero using rain boots, a purple cape and swim goggles. “Immediately he began posing for me, totally unprompted. After seeing how much he enjoyed the super hero images of himself, The Superhero Project was born. I decided to offer these sessions to other kids with special needs.”

You can view the rest of [Apollo’s Superhero Project session here](#).



“The Superhero Project sessions are sessions designed for special needs children. These sessions are done free of charge to these families. My hope is that we can spread awareness about special needs, while giving encouragement to families through the gift of professional photography.”

Be sure and check out these other super heroes (and leave a nice comment for their families).



[The Superhero Project {Cody}](#)



[The Superhero Project {Melanie}](#)



The Superhero Project {Mila}



The Superhero Project {Avery}



[The Superhero Project {Victoria}](#)



[The Superhero Project {Mordecai}](#)



[The Superhero Project {Avi}](#)



[Click here to see Superhero Cameron.](#)

Wearable For Kids With Autism May Help Predict, Avoid Meltdowns



Janet Burns,
CONTRIBUTOR

I write about tech, media, culture, and science.

Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.



(Courtesy Awake Labs)

The [exact nature](#) of very real and arresting ‘[meltdowns](#),’ or periods of stimulation overload, is [unique](#) to person living on the autism spectrum, but the inexperience and extra challenges of childhood can make them particularly tough for kids to work through. The team behind [Reveal](#), a new wearable for kids with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs), wants to start putting emotional and environmental control back in families’ hands with mood-monitoring data that can help anticipate meltdowns before they happen (and even prevent them).

Now ramping up on [Indiegogo](#), Reveal is the debut product from [Awake Labs](#), a student-led engineering start-up at the University of British Columbia (where, an undisclosed number of years ago, the author did her BA). To detect and report when anxiety and stress are on the rise, the device monitors a wearer’s heart-rate, body temperature, and sweat levels using high-tech tools similar to those found in fitness trackers (but without worries about [accurate calorie-counting](#)), while its connected app gives caregivers data-based insight into when, how, and why meltdowns might happen. “We want to reduce problem behavior and increase the amount of what we call, teachable moments,” explained mechanical engineering student Andrea Palmer, who co-founded Awake Labs and designed Reveal with fellow students, to [CBC News](#) last year. “It would have a huge impact at home, in the classroom or in daily routines.”



(Courtesy Awake Labs)

According to the team, the science behind Reveal is based on results from a number of recent studies exploring how wearable sensors may be used to monitor [electrodermal](#) and [autonomic](#) activity, as well as [how this technology](#) can [provide support](#) for children with ASDs. The product has already earned Palmer and her team a [prestigious nod](#) from Singularity University’s Canadian Global Impact Competition for its innovation and likely impact in the short term—and not just for kids with ASDs, their families, and educators.

The group originally sought to build a device for aiding persons with high-stress jobs, and discovered its potentially game-changing applications for kids with autism in the course of their research and development work.

However, in the time since they began promoting Reveal and organizing their first, family-based product study (now underway), the product has also drawn interest from adults experiencing heightened sensitivity for a variety of other reasons, and who could also benefit from better stress- and anxiety-management.

“We’ve had many people contact us who see use cases beyond Autism Spectrum Disorders, for general anxiety, Cerebral Palsy, Borderline Personality Disorder, dementia and many others,” Palmer explained via email. “After this study has concluded, we will be focusing on testing the efficacy of the anxiety algorithm, and then widen the use-cases beyond ASDs.” Paul Fijal, Head of Product Development at Awake Labs, added,

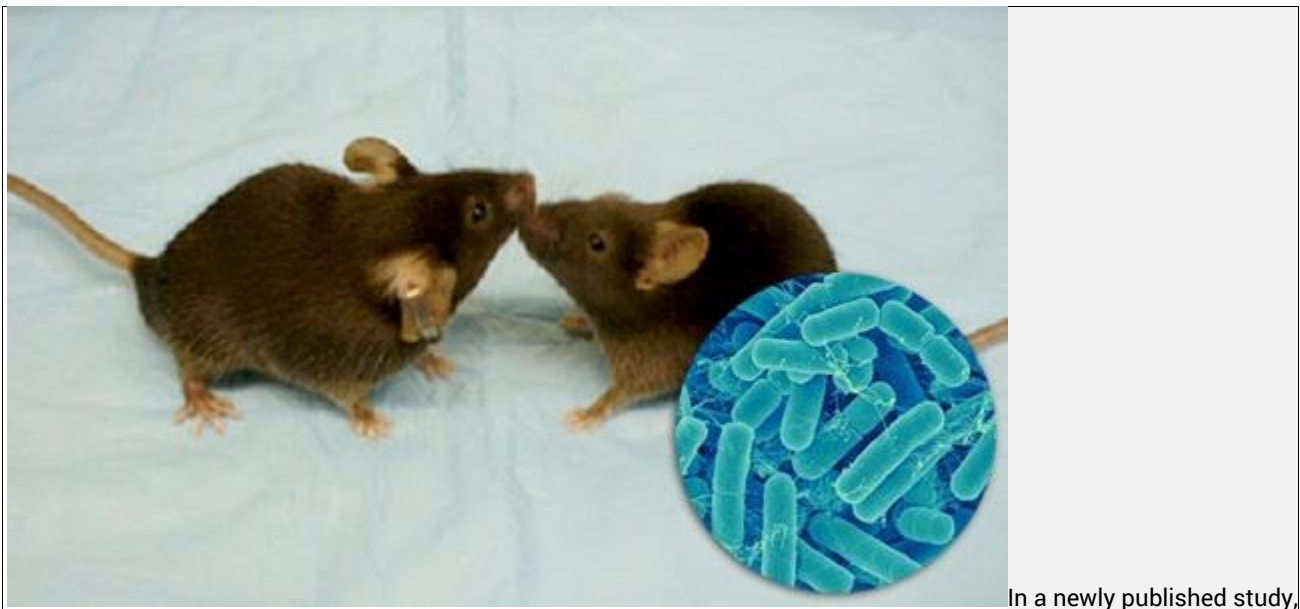
We understand the importance of building a tool that is easy to use, and scientifically accurate. With the help and guidance of clinicians, care experts, and education professionals, we are setting up additional studies to further validate our algorithm and to assess the effectiveness of Reveal in a number of different settings.

For more information on the team’s plans and progress, check out Reveal’s [Indiegogo](#) page or [website](#).

New findings on probiotics and autism: What you need to know

By: Autism Speaks at www.autismspeaks.org

A Q&A with our experts on a new mouse study that suggests a common probiotic might ease some autism symptoms



researchers used a strain of the widely available probiotic *Lactobacillus reuteri* to ease autism-like behaviors in mice that had low levels of this naturally occurring bacterium in their intestinal tract.

Over the last week, many of you have read headlines about a promising probiotic that might help people who have autism. The news stories refer to a [new scientific report](#), in the journal *Cell*, describing how one strain of the probiotic *Lactobacillus reuteri* reduced some autism-like behaviors in mice – mice that had abnormally low levels of this microbe in their digestive tract.

The researchers, led by neuroscientist Mauro Costa-Mattioli, director of the Memory and Brain Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine, and Shelly Buffington, a postdoctoral fellow in [Costa-Mattioli's lab](#), expressed enthusiasm for conducting a future clinical trial using this probiotic with people who have autism.

The findings are particularly interesting because many popular probiotics and cultured dairy products already contain one or more strains of *L. reuteri*, which occurs naturally in breast milk and a healthy intestinal tract.

We've invited gastroenterologist Kent Williams, who practices in the [Autism Speaks Autism Treatment Network](#) at Nationwide Children's Hospital (Columbus, Ohio), to join developmental pediatrician Paul Wang, Autism Speaks' head of medical research, to provide perspective and answer questions raised by the study.

Dr. Williams is also a co-investigator on a major [Autism Speaks-funded study](#) investigating the role that the microbiome plays in autism-related GI issues and behavioral symptoms. The microbiome includes the body's normal community of intestinal bacteria, which help us digest our food and interact with our body's disease-fighting immune system.

Autism Speaks: Prior to the results of the new Baylor study, what did we know about the association between intestinal bacteria – or the microbiome – and autism?

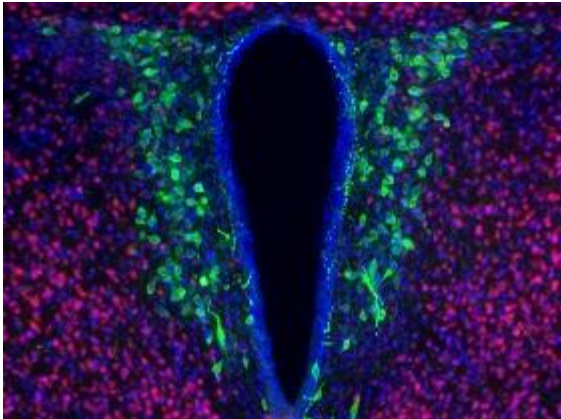
Dr. Wang: Studies of people with autism suggest that many of them have marked differences in their microbiome compared to other people. But these studies haven't been consistent in pinpointing specific differences – that is, the presence of any one particular bacterium or the absence of another.

Studies in mice have shown that changes in the microbiome can affect brain development and function. As in the Baylor study, previous mouse studies have also shown an association between changes in microbiome and autism-like behaviors such as social avoidance and repetitive actions. In some of these studies, probiotic treatment helped alleviate some, though not all, of these behavioral differences.

Dr. Williams is among the investigators currently involved in a [major study](#), supported by Autism Speaks, which we hope will give us crucial information about these differences. It will better define how the microbiome differs in children with autism. That promises to both advance understanding of how autism develops and guide the development of new therapies for those with autism.

Autism Speaks: What did the Baylor study add to our understanding of the microbiome in autism?

Dr. Williams: In some ways, this mouse study was similar to [a groundbreaking 2013 study](#) led by Autism Speaks Weatherstone Fellow Elaine Hsiao. That study associated autism-like behaviors with distinct changes in the microbiome and showed that feeding the mice *Bacteroides fragilis* - another beneficial intestinal bacterium – improved their sociability.



In a new study, feeding the probiotic *Lactobacillus reuteri* to mice with autism-like behaviors improved their sociability while increasing the number of oxytocin-producing neurons in their brains (shown in green). The new mouse study goes further in exploring a possible explanation of how changes in bacteria influence brain development and function. For instance, the researchers showed that restoring levels of the “good” bacterium *Lactobacillus reuteri* resulted in higher levels of oxytocin, a hormone associated with social behavior. It also improved signs of brain plasticity – the brain’s ability to form new connections that foster learning.

While both Dr. Hsiao’s and the new Baylor study produced promising findings, they also highlight that we don’t yet fully understand how microbiome-brain interactions influence the symptoms of autism. For instance, we don’t know why the probiotic treatments used in these mouse studies improved social interaction, but failed to ease repetitive actions and signs of anxiety.

Autism Speaks: What role might inflammation play in the autism-probiotic connection?

Dr. Wang: A key question researchers are asking is *how* does the microbiome influence the brain? There are multiple possibilities, and more than one of them could be true.

Dr. Williams: One possibility is that intestinal bacteria release chemicals that affect cells in the GI tract that, in turn, help regulate inflammation in the body. These include nerve and immune cells. Evidence

suggests that certain beneficial bacteria exert an inflammation-calming effect. In the absence of these good bacteria, inflammation may increase not only in the gastrointestinal tract, but also throughout the body. Other, less-desirable bacteria may secrete chemicals that promote inflammation.

Keep in mind, however, that the autism-microbiome connection may not have anything to do with inflammation per se. For instance, the authors of this week's report propose that the changes in the brain associated with changes in the microbiome involve the [vagus nerve](#). This nerve forms a direct connection between the gut and the central nervous system. Chemicals produced by certain intestinal bacteria may have a direct effect on this nerve – and through it the brain.

Autism Speaks: Do you have any cautions about the conclusions that the Baylor researchers drew from their study?

Dr. Wang: The main caution is simply that this work is with mice. Clearly, mouse brains aren't the same as human brains, and mouse microbiomes aren't the same as human microbiomes. We can't make the leap to human treatments yet, because the human microbiome in people who have autism is likely to be very different from the mouse microbiome studied in this research.

Dr. Williams: For instance, some studies have found that levels of *L. reuteri* are much higher in the normal mouse microbiome than in the typical human microbiome.

Autism Speaks: Is it premature for people to see if taking an available *L. reuteri* supplement improves their or their children's autism symptoms? What guidance can you provide?

Dr. Wang: We know that many of our families use over-the-counter probiotics that contain *L. reuteri*. We're not seeing any miracles, but these probiotics seem to be generally safe and may have benefits not directly related to autism.

Dr. Williams: For instance, one study found that the use of a probiotic *L. reuteri* helped ease constipation in children. Other studies have suggested that certain probiotics can help reduce abdominal pain. We know from clinical experience that these GI issues affect behavior in children who have autism.

Dr. Wang: We recommend that families discuss their interest in trying probiotics with their healthcare provider. We also recommend that they carefully consider what symptoms they're hoping to improve and then monitor the response carefully to see if there's a benefit – or, for that matter, any unwanted side effects.

Autism Speaks: Dr. Williams, you're involved in an Autism Speaks-supported study on the microbiome's role in autism. Can you tell us a about it and how it relates to the Baylor study?

Dr. Williams: We are exploring whether we can identify a distinctive microbiome in children with autism, with particular interest in children with autism who also suffer from constipation and/or abdominal pain.

In preliminary studies, likewise supported by Autism Speaks, we studied the microbiome in children being evaluated for constipation and/or abdominal pain in our GI department at Nationwide Children's Hospital. This included children with autism as well as children who were developing typically.

The results from this preliminary study indicate that the microbiome differs between children with autism and those not affected by the condition.

Now we're recruiting a larger number of children to confirm these findings. We're also recruiting children without GI symptoms.

Overall, we're hoping to better define and compare the microbiome between four groups of children: Those with autism and GI complaints, those with autism but no GI complaints, those with GI complaints but not autism, and finally children who have neither condition.

We hope these studies will help us identify GI problems in children with autism – particularly those who don't have the verbal skills to communicate their pain. We likewise hope that these studies will foster the development of new GI therapies that ease the anxiety and disruptive behaviors that commonly occur in children with autism – behaviors that may stem from microbiome-related alterations.

Autism Speaks: Dr. Wang, why is this research a priority for Autism Speaks?

Dr. Wang: GI problems are so common among both children and adults who have autism. They can profoundly affect quality of life. That's why we've long supported research into their causes and treatments. The previous research by Dr. Hsiao and others – and now these intriguing new findings – tell us that GI treatments have the potential to do more than just relieve painful GI distress. They may also have the potential to ease some of autism's core symptoms.

Autism Speaks: What next steps would you like to see in research on the gut microbiome and autism?

Dr. Wang: The research that Dr. Williams and his colleagues are pursuing is an important next step. We need to understand *how* the microbiome is different in people who have autism and how these differences can cause or worsen autism's behavioral symptoms. With this information, we can go on to design studies of microbiome treatments that have the potential to ease autism symptoms and GI distress. This kind of research promises to improve lives on multiple levels.

The Autism Speaks blog features opinions from people throughout the autism community. Each blog represents the point of view of the author and does not necessarily reflect Autism Speaks' beliefs or point of view.