

SPOTTED

Boyish looks; popular pseudoscience; older fathers and more

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Boyish looks

Much has been made of a possible link between **masculinized traits and autism**. A new study using 3-D imaging has found that prepubescent children on the spectrum tend to have facial features **that are more masculine** than those of their neurotypical counterparts.

Both boys and girls with autism have more masculinized facial features than sex-matched controls, the researchers found. In addition, social communication difficulties increase with increasing masculinity of facial features. The results were published 24 August in *Scientific Reports*.

SOURCES:

Scientific Reports / 24 Aug 2017

Hypermasculinised facial morphology in boys and girls with autism spectrum disorder and its association with symptomatology

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-017-09939-y>

Popular pseudoscience

Online parent communities are fertile ground for viral internet stories. A *BuzzFeed News* analysis found that 56 percent of putatively scientific autism-related stories shared in such communities in the past five years promoted **disproven or non-evidence-based treatments** or causes. Nevertheless, some groups built around debunked autism-causation claims have diminished in recent years, *BuzzFeed* also reported 28 August.

Among the 10 most-shared stories that supposedly present autism-related science, *BuzzFeed*

rated the top two as “unevidenced,” noting that they’d each been shared hundreds of thousands of times. Of the five top 10 most-shared articles that *BuzzFeed* ranked as “evidenced,” two of them confirm no link between vaccines and autism.

SOURCES:

BuzzFeed / 28 Aug 2017

How online filter bubbles are making parents of autistic children targets for fake “cures”

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/tomchivers/how-online-filter-bubbles-are-making-parents-of-autistic>

Complementary medicine

Complementary or alternative medicine can **strongly attract some parents** of children with autism. Acknowledging the increasing general popularity of these interventions, the American Academy of Pediatrics **released an updated statement** on them. The report, published 24 August in *Pediatrics*, includes strategies for clinicians to use in communicating with parents.

Among the strategies is the use of an ‘ARMED’ approach: Ask (about which therapies parents may be using), Respect (cultural or religious differences), Monitor (how children respond to any therapies), Educate and Distribute (evidence-based information).

SOURCES:

Pediatrics / 24 Aug 2017

Pediatric integrative medicine

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2017/08/24/peds.2017-1961>

Marvel mavericks

A California visual effects studio with some well-known clients trains and hires only artists with autism. The Exceptional Minds studio trains the artists in **all aspects of visual effects** for film, along with social skills and workplace readiness. Program graduates have landed at HBO, “Sesame Street,” Disney and Marvel, among other outlets, reported *PC Magazine* on 23 August.

SOURCES:

PC Magazine / 23 Aug 2017

At this VFX studio, artists with autism make magic for Marvel

<http://uk.pcmag.com/news/90845/at-this-vfx-studio-artists-with-autism-make-magic-for-marvel>

Older fathers

Children with older fathers have an **increased autism risk**. In the past four decades, the average age of new fathers in the United States has increased **from 27.4 years to 30.9 years**. The increase is not uniform across geographic regions or demographic groups, according to results published 30 August in *Human Reproduction*.

But the upshot is that about 9 percent of U.S. children are born to fathers over age 40, the commonly accepted cutoff for 'older dad.' The researchers noted that these findings have "implications for public health factors," including increased risk for autism, psychiatric illness and even childhood cancer in children born to older fathers. They also note that the frequencies of sperm mutations that accumulate with age are increasing in the population.

SOURCES:

Human Reproduction / 30 Aug 2017

The age of fathers in the USA is rising: an analysis of 168 867 480 births from 1972 to 2015
<https://academic.oup.com/humrep/article-abstract/doi/10.1093/humrep/dex267/4096427/The-age-of-fathers-in-the-USA-is-rising-an>

Google guidance

After a pretty disastrous debut, Google Glass may be experiencing a more promising second act: Entrepreneurs are coming up with a variety of healthcare-related uses for a new edition of the product. One Google Glass program quietly reminds people with autism to **make eye contact in conversation** and uses games to guide emotion recognition, *STAT* reported 29 August.

SOURCES:

STAT / 29 Aug 2017

Google Glass is back — as a tool to coach autistic children, train doctors, and more
<https://www.statnews.com/2017/08/29/google-glass-health-care/>

Tammet tome

Springing from the success of his memoir, "Born on a Blue Day," Daniel Tammet has written a

fourth book. Tammet, who has autism, sees the successful publication of his collection of essays about language, titled “Every Word is a Bird We Teach to Sing,” as a **rejoinder to some critics** who viewed his first book as “a one-off ‘disability genre’ memoir,” he wrote 25 August in *The Guardian*.

“In writing the story of my formative years in the words I had back in 2005 (I was 26), with feeling but without confidence or high finish, I found my voice,” Tammet wrote. He noted that English-language critics seemed most likely to view his first book as a one-time “account of a ‘numbers wiz’,” whereas “German and Spanish and Brazilian and Japanese readers saw something else, and sent letters urging me to continue writing.”

SOURCES:

The Guardian / 25 Aug 2017

Daniel Tammet: why autism is no bar to becoming a bestselling author

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/aug/25/daniel-tammet-why-autism-is-no-bar-to-becoming-a-bestselling-author>

‘Predatory’ publishing

The journal publisher Omics International is the target of a lawsuit by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission for **“predatory” publishing practices**, such as springing steep fees on unwary academics after accepting their paper submissions. The company enjoys considerable cooperation from pharmaceutical companies that frequently submit to Omics journals and participate in Omics conferences, *Bloomberg Businessweek* reported on 29 August.

SOURCES:

Bloomberg Businessweek / 29 Aug 2017

Medical journals have a fake news problem

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2017-08-29/medical-journals-have-a-fake-news-problem>

Trump retreat

Many groups have bowed out of using Donald Trump’s Florida properties as winter fundraising venues, concerned about the association after Trump’s mixed messages following the white supremacist demonstration in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August. But one autism-related nonprofit

is sticking it out. The Els for Autism Foundation, founded by professional golfer Ernie Els and his wife, will host its annual fundraiser at Trump National Golf Club, the *Palm Beach Post* reported on 22 August.

SOURCES:

Palm Beach Post / 22 Aug 2017

Autism charity sticks with Trump property for fundraiser

<http://www.palmbeachpost.com/business/just-autism-charity-sticks-with-trump-property-for-fundraiser/FeWgrT2de1Dx2f58zHKlul/>

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