

News Release

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Landmark Consensus Articles Published in *Pediatrics* Acknowledge the Need to Improve Evaluation and Treatment of Gastrointestinal Disorders in Individuals with Autism

The Autism Research Institute encourages parents who feel their child might have GI dysfunction to bring these important papers to the attention of their health care providers

□ New York, NY –

A causal relationship between gastrointestinal disorders and the behavioral features of children with autism spectrum disorder has been acknowledged for years by parents caring for those affected, yet dismissed by mainstream medicine. A landmark paper, *Recommendations for Evaluation and Treatment of Common Gastrointestinal Problems in Children with ASDs*, a consensus report published this week in *Pediatrics*, is an important step forward in closing this gap. Acknowledging that certain behavioral manifestations of patients with ASD such as self-injury and poor sleep might have a GI basis is the first step toward achieving substantive therapies.

Because it was felt that many individuals with ASD might have undiagnosed medical conditions, often involving the gastrointestinal tract, representatives from the Autism Research Institute (ARI) and other autism advocacy groups worked to convene a gut consensus meeting from which the articles were derived. On May 29–30, 2008, a multidisciplinary panel of 27 clinical and research experts met in Boston, Massachusetts to develop recommendations for the evaluation and treatment of GI disorders in individuals with ASD.

ARI's Director Dr. Stephen Edelson commented, "This is truly a human rights issue; every child deserves proper medical attention--whether or not they have autism. This published report brings much-needed focus to gastrointestinal problems that are commonly associated with the autism spectrum. The conclusions of the report are clear: physicians need to be alert and responsive to such problems when treating these patients; additional research on prevalence, cause, and appropriate treatment is imperative."

Parents and physicians should be on the lookout for the most common GI symptoms reported in people with ASD: chronic constipation, abdominal pain with or without diarrhea, reflux, and abdominal bloating. Problem behaviors such as self-injury and aggression, as well as overall changes such as sleep disturbance or irritability, might be indicators of stomach pain. The authors concluded that "The approach to evaluation and diagnosis of possible underlying medical conditions, in particular GI disorders, should be no different from the standard of care for persons without ASD." [Pediatrics reports need to evaluate and treat ASD individuals for GI symptoms](#)