Several independent investigations have shown the presence of a severe, extensive defect in language comprehension, in control functions associated with language, and with the processing of symbolic or sequenced information. Circumstantial evidence suggests that this cognitive defect constitutes the primary handicap in autism, the social and behavioral abnormalities arising as secondary consequences. It remains uncertain whether the cognitive/language defect is a sufficient cause for autism or whether some interaction with particular personality attributes or family environment is necessary. The basic cause of the cognitive defect is unknown, although the high rate of fits in intellectually retarded autistic children suggests the presence of some kind of organic brain disorder. Among the intelligent autistic children, there is less evidence for structural brain pathology; it remains possible that in some cases autism may arise on the basis of some maturational disorder or genetically determined condition.

Michael Rutter
1971
Research on autism has begun to clarify many aspects of this enigmatic and devastating neurodevelopmental disorder. Studies are being conducted at all levels of analysis, and we are beginning to see the interconnections between the underlying biological causes and the cognitive and behavioral manifestations of autistic disorder.

...Despite the exponential growth in basic studies on autism, there has been relatively little research on new treatments and interventions. It is hoped that our new knowledge about the core biological and cognitive deficits in autism will encourage more research on how to treat children and adults with autism, which is the ultimate goal of these endeavors.

Tager-Flusberg, Joseph, & Folstein, 2001
What is up currently?

- Studies on intervention effectiveness
- Advances in understanding the biology of autism
- Gauging autism prevalence
- Importance of monitoring early symptoms and severity
- Advances in genetics of autism


7. The combined impact of three 2018 reports:


Autism Cares Act of 2019 passed in House and moving on to Senate.

The measure, H.R. 1058, would ensure continued federal support for everything from autism research to prevalence tracking, screening, professional training and other initiatives.

The proposal includes an extra $368 million over the current funding level to renew the law for the next five years.
Some Updates from Pennsylvania

Ryan Delaney: BCBA, Consultant
PaTTAN Autism Initiative ABA Supports