

Noah, for one, is peeling back the layers of autism

The walls inside Terri and Tom Lewis' home in Deer Park are filled with the bright, 2-D crayon art of their three children, 7-year-old Bethany and the 4-year-old twins, Ivy and Noah.

Terri says Noah is emerging from autism. The official word from the medical establishment on autism is that there's no cure. But Terri says the establishment is wrong. She insists Noah is coming back to her, getting better. His drawings suggest she's right.

One he did last Mother's Day is of two jagged slashes of brown and purple. Another he did just two days ago is of a rainbow, beautifully drawn, in neat concentric arcs. Evidence of an emerging?

"He's light years better now," his mother says.

Terri contacted me to take issue with a recent column describing autism as "a lifelong developmental disability resulting from a neurological disorder." The column also said "some evidence" exists that autism may be a side effect of routine childhood vaccinations.

Some evidence? Terri wrote in her e-mail.

"The evidence is blindingly clear and still pouring in," she said.

"You have doctors testifying in Congress. They're calling it the biggest mistake in the history of modern medicine."

Like all moms, Terri wants to do what's best for her children. For instance, she made sure they had all their shots, every one on time. The twins had their first shots when they each weighed 6 pounds. By the way, boys with autism outnumber girls by four to one.

Terri noticed something not right with Noah early on, around his 20th month. Six months earlier, he'd uttered his first sentence, "Take Noah home!"

Then he began going backward, losing speech, drifting away from her. He wouldn't even look her in the eye. Terri could see his twin sister progressing, but not him. In his 25th month, she knew something was very wrong. At 27 months, he was diagnosed with "mild to moderate" autism. She knows she is fortunate to have caught it early.

Terri has since learned that many of the vaccines her children were given contained Thimerosal, a preservative that is nearly 50 percent mercury. After what she said was literally hundreds of hours of research, she has come to believe her family has been swept up in a national tragedy.

"Once a point of great national pride, there is actually extensive evidence ... that our nation's childhood vaccinations have been knowingly and terribly compromised," Terri's e-mail read.

The first vaccines containing mercury - again, as a preservative - began showing up on doctors' shelves in the late 1930s. Prior to that, there was no medical record of autism. The first cases were documented in 1943, in American children. The disease was not seen in Europe until the 1950s, after mercury was added to vaccines there.

In the early days, autism occurred in one in 5,000 children. The number increased in the '80s as more vaccines were added to the childhood medical regimen. Today, even the medical establishment agrees that autism now occurs once in every 166 children.

Terri has learned, too, that the symptoms of autism and the symptoms of mercury poisoning are the same: delayed or absent speech, poor social skills, a lack of awareness of pain. Also, the eye contact goes away. Mercury poisoning touches the mind and the body, as does autism. Mercury damages the body's digestive, nervous, immune and detoxification systems - all the systems under siege in autism.



In his book, "Evidence of Harm: Mercury in Vaccines and the Autism Epidemic: A Medical Controversy," New York Times writer David Kirby writes:

"Autism has rarely been reported outside of industrialized countries, at least until recent years. A good example is China, where companies such as Merck and Glaxo-SmithKline have begun an aggressive pediatric-marketing campaign, selling millions of dollars in vaccines to the Communist government. ...

"On Aug. 11, 2004, the official Chinese news agency, Xinhua, reported that children suffering with autism in that country had suddenly and unexpectedly skyrocketed. In a few short years, the number of reported cases jumped from nearly nothing to some 1.8 million children."

In the late 1990s, the U.S. House of Representatives Government Reform Committee, reached this conclusion:

"Thimerosal ...in vaccines is likely related to the autism epidemic. This epidemic in all probability may have been prevented or curtailed had the FDA not been asleep at the switch regarding injected Thimerosal and the sharp rise of infant exposure to this neurotoxin.

"Our public health agencies' failure to act is indicative of institutional malfeasance for self-protection and misplaced protectionism of the pharmaceutical industry."

According to Terri, studies since then have established a conclusive link between mercury and autism.

"But mercury has always been known to be a neurotoxin," she says. "That's what so bizarre about all this."

This is a mere glimpse of the autism picture. Terri allows that the controversy is hotly debated. Of course it is. Massive amounts of money are involved. But in the small corner of the world where the Lewis family lives, the important thing is that Noah is getting better. His parents are making it happen.

They found a book by another mom of a child with autism, "Unraveling the Mystery of Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorder," by Karyn Seroussi. It persuaded them to eliminate gluten - wheat, mostly - and dairy products from Noah's diet.

They read everything they could find about a growing number of physicians who follow what is called the DAN Protocol, short for Defeat Autism Now. Finally, their research led them to www.generationrescue.org, where they put it all together: The measures they were taking worked because they were helping Noah's body deal with and then detoxify the mercury.

Terri consulted a nutritionist and added digestive enzymes to Noah's routine. She and Tom began taking their son to sessions where a physical and occupational therapist work on him at the same time.

"Also, you do super one-on-one work with these kids, where you're down on the floor with them 15 to 20 hours a week, in their faces, doing different kinds of play therapy," Terri says.

"The latest is called RDI, Relationship Development Intervention. It seems to work. So does one called Greenspan."

After being diagnosed with autism, Noah would wake up in the middle of the night and stay awake for three hours. Now he sleeps through the night. His constant diarrhea has cleared up. Terri says he's almost back to where he should be with his speech. There is eye contact again. And his smile is back.

Noah was going backward. Two years later, he's moving forward, like a regular kid.

His return has been gradual. Autism, like mercury poisoning, comes off in layers, Terri says. Its behavioral symptoms fade in layers, too.

She is not deceiving herself. She charts out her son's progress in a logical, left-brain process that's highly attuned to self-inflicted baloney. She points out there are now documented cases of children recovering completely from autism.

"I think Noah will be all right - for two years, I have been slowly but surely watching him come back to me," she says.

"But there are still times when I'm gripped with fear."

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