

NEWS

Community Newsletter: Gene-by-sex effects, biosecurity laws, participatory research

BY SPECTRUM

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Happy Memorial Day to readers in the United States — and welcome to *Spectrum's* Community Newsletter.

This week, high praise — and a hand-clap emoji — come from geneticist **Kevin Mitchell** (of *Wiring the Brain* fame) for a new-ish preprint from **Jonathan Sebat's lab** at the University of California, San Diego. The **preprint**, uploaded to medRxiv in April, presents results that “demonstrate that a phenotypic spectrum of ASD is attributable to the relative loadings and gene-by-sex effects of rare and common variation.”

A phenotypic spectrum of autism is attributable to the combined effects of rare variants, polygenic risk and sex <https://t.co/wNMD0u6fWY> - really nice work from [@sebatlab](#) ????

— Kevin Mitchell (@WiringTheBrain) **May 25, 2021**

Spectrum covered **related work** from Sebat's lab at last year's annual **American Society of Human Genetics** meeting.

Sebat himself called out a news story published in *STAT* on 20 May that describes legislation to impose screening protocols on the growing gene synthesis industry. “Why is this not big news on science Twitter?” he asks. “This will impact scientists studying pathogen genetics.”

Why is this not big news on science Twitter? This will impact scientists studying pathogen genetics <https://t.co/Rb563HGHA9>

— Jonathan Sebat (@sebatlab) **May 20, 2021**

Laura Crane, associate professor of psychology and human development at University College London in the United Kingdom, issued a ‘new-paper’ tweet. She and her colleagues have tracked the impact of COVID-19 on specialist autism schools in England.

Now published in [@FrontEducation...](#)

Vulnerable and Forgotten: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Autism Special Schools in England [#openaccess](#) <https://t.co/DVCaZlomiB> [@CRAE_IOE](#)

— Laura Crane (@LauraMayCrane) **May 25, 2021**

Autism tweeted a thread that lays out a new paper in the journal’s pages. **Teresa Tavassoli**, associate professor of psychology at the University of Reading in the U.K., and her colleagues describe “heightened sensory hyperreactivity, an intolerance of uncertainty and anxiety, including separation anxiety, in autistic preschoolers.”

The relationship between sensory reactivity, intolerance of uncertainty and anxiety subtypes in preschool-age autistic children.

New [#OpenAccess](#) paper by [@KerenMacLennan](#), Timothy Rossow & [@TeresaTavassoli](#), funded by [@MQ](#) & [@Autistica](#). A thread! ???? (1/9)<https://t.co/1adTslwfEZ>

— Autism Journal (@journalautism) **May 26, 2021**

And for those who missed it, there is still a lot of online discussion around the first [Interdisciplinary Autism Research Festival](#), which took place from 19 to 21 May. The event,

organized by University College London and the University of Leeds in the U.K., put a spotlight on participatory research.

isn't the ADOS not just an instrument for autistic people who have really high support needs?

— Katheterkarambolage (@Kathetbolage) **May 20, 2021**

That's it for this week. If you have any suggestions for interesting social posts you saw in the autism research sphere, send an email to chelsey@spectrumnews.org.