

SPOTTED

Spotted around the web: Gender equity in grants, animal behavior pitfalls, Zoom fatigue

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WEEK OF FEBRUARY 1ST

Research roundup

- Young autistic children show some improvement in cognitive abilities and everyday life skills after two years of **applied behavior analysis**, according to a new meta-analysis. **Autism**
- Naturalistic developmental behavioral interventions may boost social, cognitive and play skills, particularly in situations that closely mimic the training itself. **Autism Research**
- Astrocytes — brain cells that modulate neuronal transmission — may be key players in shifting the balance of excitatory and inhibitory pathways in people with tuberous sclerosis complex. **Cells**
- A brain circuit important in coordinating the body's movements with visual information may be altered in autistic children. **Autism Research**
- Depression seems to occur more often in people on the spectrum who have difficulty identifying emotions, as opposed to those who don't. **Scientific Reports**
- Autistic children may react more negatively than non-autistic children to parental conflict. **Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders**
- A new review article summarizes clinical trials of medications that are used to treat autism traits. **Current Psychiatry**
- Children later diagnosed with autism often show early difficulties with both fine and gross motor skills. **Pediatrics**
- CHD8, a top autism gene, appears to regulate early steps in the renewal and differentiation of bone-marrow stem cells. **Cell Reports**
- Policies that have improved gender equity in research grants, especially during the coronavirus pandemic, include extending deadlines and explicitly asking that research

rationales include consideration of participant identity, such as gender or race.

Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences

Science and society

- Researchers must be careful of the many pitfalls involved in interpreting animal behavior as a model for humans, argues neuroscientist Lisa Genzel. *eNeuro*
 - The psychoactive drugs psilocybin, LSD and ecstasy have therapeutic effects for a variety of psychiatric conditions, according to clinical trials in which they are administered under medical supervision for safety reasons; these constraints may complicate their broader use. *Nature*
 - Dara McAnulty, a Northern Irish teenager with autism, describes his connection with nature in a soon-to-be-published book, “Diary of a Young Naturalist.” *BuzzFeed*
 - A long-running project in Texas to advance telehealth services for autistic children has trained dozens of area clinicians and is using COVID-19 relief funds to expand the program. *KSAT*
 - As biomedical researchers rushed to study the novel coronavirus, some switching their lab’s focus entirely, duplication of efforts has not always yielded more knowledge. *The Conversation*
 - Zoom fatigue may be affecting grant reviews. *Nature*
 - Most physicians think that people with disabilities have a poorer quality of life than those without, even though surveys routinely find both groups respond similarly to life-satisfaction questions. *STAT*
 - Pending legislation in Virginia would allow criminal defendants to offer evidence that their autism or intellectual disabilities played a role in their actions. *Virginia Mercury*
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