

## Partly Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs

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Editor

### Autism: The Theme Issue

The title<sup>a</sup> of this editorial reminds me of autism (more specifically that which we refer to as the Autism Spectrum Disorders [ASD]). This is because even though we know what all the words mean; we may not be sure how it fits together. We are also puzzled by just what the exact meaning of the total phrase may be. Depending upon the author and which paper you read, the autism spectrum has been expanded to include: Autism, Aspergers Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Disorders-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS), Rett Syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, Semantic Pragmatic Communication Disorder, Non-Verbal Learning Disabilities, and even some forms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. With so many autisms, where do we begin? The very best place to start is by reading this edition of *Optometry & Vision Development* because it's all about autism.

Theme issues often have guardian angels (also known as theme issue editors), who work untiringly to find authors, send the papers out for peer review, review the papers themselves and in general, do all

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<sup>a</sup> *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* is a children's book and now a movie about the tiny town of Chewandswallow. *This town is very much like any other tiny town except for its weather which came three times a day, at breakfast, lunch and dinner. But it never rained rain and it never snowed snow and it never blew just wind. It rained things like soup and juice. It snowed things like mashed potatoes.* [http://www.amazon.com/Cloudy-Chance-Meatballs-Judi-Barrett/dp/0689707495/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1248121409&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Cloudy-Chance-Meatballs-Judi-Barrett/dp/0689707495/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1248121409&sr=1-1)

those things necessary to put a theme issue together and ready it for publication. COVD's own, Rachel A. (Stacey) Coulter, OD, FCOVD, FAAO; accepted the responsibility as theme editor for this issue and as you will read here, the end result is spectacular. Besides editing this issue, she has also written an editorial<sup>1</sup> and an article titled "Understanding the Visual Symptoms of Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder".<sup>2</sup> Please read both very carefully.

Several years ago, I presented a lecture on the etiology of various disorders of special needs patients at the International Congress of Behavioral Optometry in Australia.<sup>3</sup> This presentation briefly discussed the numerous potential causes for autism. At this time none of these etiologies appeared to have been accepted as the one true cause of ASD. In this issue I (and my colleagues Viola and Donati) have had an opportunity to expand upon these potential etiologies.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, we seem to be still looking for that one true cause. It does appear, however that a genetic/environment etiology is most likely involved. We also learn in an article by Viola<sup>5</sup> (with a bit of assistance by me) of the neuro-anatomical, electrophysiological and visual function and visual perceptual anomalies noted for children with autism. Can we use this knowledge not only to diagnose, but treat autism? Is autism curable? The cause, treatment and cure for autism is out there ready to be discovered, used and developed. I hope that optometry is in the forefront of this process.

According to prolific COVD researchers, authors and clinicians Drs. Len Press and Jack Richman, we should already be in the vanguard of those diagnosing this condition. Their article, "The Role of Optometry in Early Identification of Autism Spectrum Disorders"<sup>6</sup> clearly outlines how all members of COVD can be a part of the early identification program for ASD. Read this. Do it for the benefit of the children and families we see every day.

Nancy G. Torgerson, OD, FCOVD, is a name familiar to all within the College of Optometrists

in Vision Development. When President of this organization, she led us with great insight and enthusiasm. As an author with a lifetime of clinical experiences, she brings her insights into working with those with autism to the written page. Her article, "Insights into the Diagnosis and Treatment of Patients within the Autism Spectrum: A Patient's Story"<sup>7</sup> is a must read. It tells us why we do what we do.

And finally, to round out this issue is an outstanding literature review by Dr. David Goss, book reviews by Dr. Press and myself, and our NewsMakers column (so you can stay up to date on all of COVD's members many accomplishments). Read. Enjoy. Ask questions.

If it happens to be raining meatballs, well just call me over and I'll sprinkle a bit of freshly grated Romano cheese on it! Once the cheese is applied, all becomes clear.

## References

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2. Coulter RA. Understanding the visual symptoms of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). *Optom Vis Dev* 2009;40(3):164-179.
3. Maino D. Special Populations: Etiologies. International Congress of Behavioral Optometry. Sydney, Australia. <http://www.oepf.org/Docs/special%20pop%20etiologies.pdf>. Accessed 07-09
4. Maino DM, Viola SG, Donati R. The Etiology of Autism. *Optom Vis Dev* 2009;40(3):150-156.
5. Viola SG, Maino DM. Brain anatomy, electrophysiology and visual function/perception in children within the autism spectrum disorder. *Optom Vis Dev* 2009;40(3):164-175.
6. Press LJ, Richman J. The role of optometry in early identification of Autism Spectrum Disorders. *Optom Vis Dev* 2009;40(3):141-149.
7. Torgerson NG. Insights into the Diagnosis and Treatment of Patients within the Autism Spectrum: A Patient's Story *Optom Vis Dev* 2009;40(3):176-183.

## Correction

Please note that in the article Maples WC, Savoy RS, Harville BJ, Golden LR, Hoenes R. Comparison of distance and near heterophoria by two clinical methods,

*OVD* 2009;40(2):100-106, that Richard Hoenes' degree should have been noted as being M.A. and not O.D.

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