Today’s piece was prepared by Joy Thurman-Nguyen MS4, based on an article in the Seattle Times, [Researchers may have a way to help predict autism](http://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/researchers-may-have-a-way-to-help-predict-autism/)

The article is based on a recent Nature publication regarding early brain development in infants at high risk for autism spectrum disorder (ASD), with an overarching goal to detect ASD so that interventions can be implemented earlier with the aim to reduce phenotypic severity. High-risk children (based on having an older sibling with ASD) underwent brain MRI brain at 6-, 12-, and 24-months. Physical brain differences identified by MRI among high-risk children later diagnosed with ASD were then applied to a separate high-risk group of children, among whom this design correctly predicted ASD in 80%. Another significant predictor of autism was excessive growth in the size and surface brain area between 6 and 12 months of age.

The Seattle Times article explains the study’s findings in a clear and easy-to-understand way, and the journalist briefly touches on how the findings can translate to clinical practice, with a comment from one of the research investigators not to anticipate universal MRI scans due to cost, but that scans might be selected for high-risk children. The Seattle Times article did not touch on any counterarguments or study limitations of the study, leaving little critical thought to the reader.

**RESOURCES ON AUTISM SCIENCE:**

[Autism Science Foundation](http://autismsciencefoundation.org) *Non-profit agency that funds high-quality scientific research, and provides education and other services to the public*

[ASD Screening and Diagnosis for Healthcare Professionals](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/hcp-screening.html) *Support from the US Centers for Disease Control & Prevention*

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!