Today’s piece was prepared by Anisha Chandra Schwarz, MD, MS, based on a Fox News article, “Novel screening technique uses movement to diagnose and treat autism”. [*http://www.foxnews.com/health/2013/07/24/novel-screening-technique-promises-easier-way-to-diagnose-and-treat-autism/#ixzz2aCUSTP3Z*](http://www.foxnews.com/health/2013/07/24/novel-screening-technique-promises-easier-way-to-diagnose-and-treat-autism/#ixzz2aCUSTP3Z)

The article discusses findings of a study funded by the National Science Foundation that employs a novel method of tracking children with autism using micro-movement analysis to diagnose and treat children with autism. The concept is that children with autism have fewer predictable anticipatory involuntary movements than children without, which the journalist reports was viewed to represent an indicator of the autistic child’s impaired ability to act with advance knowledge of what was likely to happen and, thereby to serve as an indicator of their impaired ability to anticipate and act on social cues.

The journalist’s piece presupposes this to have been a well-designed study. However, the article does not address the basic characteristics of the test, the neurocognitive basis for using movement as a tracker for autism, or explain to the reader why teaching a child to move in a certain way would modify the course of disorder. Also, there’s no mention of the original research design methods of recruitment or diagnostic validity of the participants. The journalist incorrectly distinguishes humans from primates and appears unaware that a statistical Gaussian distribution is known more familiarly as “a bell-shaped curve”.

The implication in the Fox News article is that micro-movement analysis used in autistic children can help teach the children to move more predictably using a reward-based system and that in so doing, the children can then also learn to behave in more pro-social ways. Whether this approach proves scientifically sound, the reader may be falsely misled to believe micro-movement analysis is now accepted as reliable in treating children with autism, or that the approach is currently available for clinical use.

**RESOURCES ON AUTISM UNDERSTANDING:**

Autism video Glossary *Resource of Autism Speaks* <http://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism/video-glossary>

Developmental Monitoring tracking tools *Resource of the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention* <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/DetectAutismTools/>

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