**Some With Autism Diagnosis Can Overcome Symptoms, Study Finds**

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/17/health/some-with-autism-diagnosis-can-recover-study-finds.html?ref=health&_r=0>

Today’s piece was prepared by Chris Horvat, MD and is based on an article in the New York Times health section entitled “Some With Autism Diagnosis Can Overcome Symptoms, Study Finds”.

The article highlights findings from a study that examined 34 recruited children, youth and young adults who apparently recovered from a diagnosis of autism (Optimal Outcome, or “OO” group) comparing them to matched typically developing, or “TD”, controls. While the overall tone of the NY Times article is guarded, the summarized findings are sure to resonate with many parents optimistic that their child will ultimately follow a course of typical development. Little difference was noted between the OO and TD groups when compared on socialization, communication, facial recognition or language scales.

Autism recovery is poorly understood and controversial. Previous studies suggest 1 in 5 individuals diagnosed with autism will eventually be “cured”. Some argue that such studies incorrectly diagnosed young children. Others note that “recovered” individuals may represent a unique subset intrinsically bound to overcome autism. The controversy extends from our limited understanding of this heterogeneous disorder. Much work remains in characterizing genetics, environmental and neurostructural bases of autism and its subtypes. While the featured study identifies a cohort that no longer qualifies for a diagnosis of autism, it remains to be seen whether a particular intervention proved key in determining this outcome. The journalist effectively relates this precaution to the reader. Despite integrity in reporting, some reader comments that follow the article convey a frequent bias that autism implies a shared biologic entity and that a cure can be found universally (e.g., through diet manipulation, through sensory modulation, etc.). For many with autism, complete recovery is unlikely; however, family members of children with autism should remain hopeful that the future will bring new therapies and an increasingly clear understanding of the disorder.

RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES ON AUTISM

[Autism Speaks: Transition Toolkit](http://www.autismspeaks.org/docs/family_services_docs/transition.pdf) Guide for families to assist transition to adulthood

Fein, D. et al. Optimal outcome in individuals with a history of autism. *J Child Psychol Psychiatry* 2013 Feb;54(2):195-20

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