Today’s piece was prepared by Eric J. Allenspach, MD, PhD and is based on a story published in BBC News, entitled “Children ‘May Grow Out of Autism’”. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-21029593>

Autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) are generally considered lifelong disabilities, although the medical literature has case reports of individuals who lose the diagnosis, though it remains unclear whether they had been misdiagnosed, improved based upon treatments or developmentally outgrew autism. The BBC article discusses a study that followed children diagnosed with autism who later functioned as well as typically developing control children. The study discusses the controversial claim that children might possibly outgrow autism.

The study used cognitive and observational tests, as well as reports from the children's parents and school to determine functioning. Domains explored included language, face recognition, socialization and communication. A group of 34 ‘optimal outcome’ (OO) individuals who had lost all ASD symptoms as defined by their being without any core autism symptoms and functioning within the normal intellectual range; however, other difficulties, such as weaknesses in executive functioning or vulnerability to anxiety and depression may still exist. Using comparison groups of 44 high-functioning individuals with a current ASD diagnosis and 34 typically developing (TD) peers, the OO group was indistinguishable from TD peers in the identified domains

The journalist implies a balanced caution regarding concerns that readers may inappropriately generalize the research findings to all children with autism and emphasizes some of core limitations to doing so. Hopeful parents of children with autism who read the BBC article may ambitiously overlook such cautions. Clinicians can sensitively, but with objectivity, help parents to maintain a reasoned approach by listening actively to their interests and concerns, and by appropriately directing parents to evidence-supported management in autism.

**RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES & PROVIDERS ON AUTISM:**

* ***Early Intervention in Autism*** *NY State Dep’t of Health information*<http://www.health.ny.gov/community/infants_children/early_intervention/autism/>
* ***National Autism Ctr.*** *Significant findings of the National Standards Project*  *Project* <http://www.nationalautismcenter.org/nsp/findings.php>

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