Today’s piece was prepared by Kathi Rosen, MD, and is based on an article from the New York Times, entitled “Journal Retracts 1998 Paper Linking Autism to Vaccines” <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/03/health/research/03lancet.html?ref=health> a story from CNN also addresses this topic <http://www.cnn.com/2010/HEALTH/02/02/lancet.retraction.autism/index.html>

The 1998 Lancet article that proposed a link between autism and vaccines, authored by Andrew Wakefield, has been officially retracted. The NY Times reports on the British medical panel’s review reassessing Dr. Wakefield’s financial conflicts and scientific methods, concluding “Dr. Wakefield had been dishonest, violated basic research ethics rules and showed a ‘callous disregard’ for the suffering of children involved in his research.”

While a CDC spokesperson said the retraction is “significant” and the Lancet’s editor referred to the information as a “damning indictment of Andrew Wakefield and his research”, there was also a response from the director of SafeMinds (a group that supports a vaccine-autism link), remarking that the retraction will strengthen Andrew Wakefield’s credibility amongst parents and that it will fuel the controversy.

The New York Times article comments that with each new theory regarding a link between vaccines and autism, parent groups are calling for more scientific research. Yet several well-executed studies have failed to show a link between vaccines and autism. This article suggests that research money should be directed toward investigating other possible causes of autism.

With rates of autism recently reported to be even higher (nearly 1 in 100 based on 2007 data, as compared to 1 in 150 reported in 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/HEALTH/10/05/autism.study/index.html>), understandably anxious parents will continue to have many questions about what causes autism. As healthcare providers, we should be prepared to discuss this report anew with the families we care for. The following resources may be helpful:

**RESOURCES ON EVIDENCE-BASED AUTISM AND VACCINE RESEARCH**

* General Autism Research

1. Separating Fact from Fiction in the Etiology and Treatment of Autism: A Scientific Review of the Evidence <http://www.quackwatch.org/01QuackeryRelatedTopics/autism.html>
2. CDC information on Autism Research <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/research.html>
3. NIH Autism Research Network <http://www.autismresearchnetwork.org/AN/wfCPEA.aspx>
   * Resources on vaccines and autism
4. Autism Science Foundation <http://www.autismsciencefoundation.org/autismandvaccines.html>
5. CDC Vaccine information <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/spec-grps/hcp/downloads/vacsafe-mmr-color-office.pdf>
6. Immunization Action Coalition <http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2065.htm>

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