Today’s piece was prepared by Molly Taylor, MD and comes from The Atlantic, The Mysterious Link Between Autism and Extraordinary Abilities.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2016/01/savants-autism-spectrum-prodigies/424248/>

The article touches on the possible correlation between autism and so-called ‘savants.’  The story primarily follows a 20-year-old musical phenomenon with septo-optic-dysplasia and autism (ASD), but then also comments more broadly on the hypothesis that there may be a common etiology for both ASD and savant syndrome.

The story’s focus on abilities – rather than on disabilities – among youth with autism is refreshing. This article is very interesting and features a compelling video of this young man playing very beautiful music with terrific skill while at the same time featuring his peculiar social behaviors suggestive of autism read. At the same time, the article presents sweeping general conclusions about populations of people with autism despite referencing a rather small set of data.  The author notes a selection bias toward more severe cases of ASD, but folds in two main hypotheses: left-sided cortical injury ‘releasing’ dormant abilities of the right hemisphere (which only really applies to stroke, trauma, or neurodegenerative disorder patients), and heritable common genetic mutations (very small sample size, n=11).  The article also makes reference to Bernard Rimland to support its argument. Rimland established a popularly recognized autism center in San Diego, without noting that the center’s website at one time remarked that anecdote, rather than scientific evidence, was adequately compelling to determine medical treatments because the effects “were obvious” (this statement was later removed from the website).

**AUTISM & HIDDEN TALENTS RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES:**

Autism Speaks: <https://www.autismspeaks.org/>

In Praise of Misfits <http://www.economist.com/node/21556230> *The Economist article about advantages to features of people with differences*

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