# Today’s piece was prepared by Sarah Nutman, MD based on a Washington Post article [A medical condition or just a difference? The question roils autism community](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/a-medical-condition-or-just-a-difference-the-question-roils-autism-community/2019/05/03/87e26f7e-6845-11e9-8985-4cf30147bdca_story.html?utm_term=.848ac179a405).

This article uses tensions over “All in a Row,” a play that has recently opened in London that depicts an eleven-year-old autistic child to discuss the debate over how autism is labeled (at their most extremes, as a medical condition requiring intensive treatment versus as a neurological difference that should be embraced and accommodated). It traces the history of the “neurodiversity” movement and the backlash (and arguments) against it, as well as why these definitions matter, not only for how autism is viewed both by people with autism and the public but also in terms of material benefits and who gets to have input regarding these benefits.

While the article is balanced in its presentation of the two main sides, it very much aligns the medical condition side with severely affected individuals and their families and the neurodiversity side with very high functioning individuals, and in doing so, perhaps makes too much of a generalization. In addition, while it has some information about the spectrum of autism, including a quotation from a parent with multiple autistic children who have varying degrees of independence, it does not show well the diversity of the autism spectrum.

**RESOURCES ON AUTISM & NEURODIVERSITY:**

[History and ethical issues in autism treatment](https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/sites/journalofethics.ama-assn.org/files/2019-04/vm-1504.pdf) *An entire issue of the AMA’s Journal of Ethics* *from 2015* devoted to this topic; provides a clear summary of the history and some of the ethical issues that occur when treating autism:

[Association for Science in Autism Treatment](http://asatonline.org/) Background & recommendations on current treatments (more than some of the other resources, tries to appeal to both sides of this debate)

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