Today’s piece is prepared by Vanessa Pineros, MD based on a story in the United Press International Genetic analysis: Rare mutations cause half of all autism cases <http://www.upi.com/Health_News/2015/09/22/Genetic-analysis-Rare-mutations-cause-half-of-all-autism-cases/4201442953404/>

This article discusses a recent publication in PNAS that summarizes that about half of autism cases may be attributed to inheritance of any of several single rare spontaneous mutations, rather than to inheritance of a combination of harmless mutations that, when combined, result in autism as is generally thought. Some of the rare mutations are found in genes necessary to embryonic typical brain development, so it’s easy to understand the appeal in attributing autism to mutations of these exomes. Also, these genes were less likely than others in the human genome to have random mutations, indicating the strong negative pressure of mutations in these regions. While the UPI article overall summarizes the science topic well, its use of obscure medical terms and inclusion of a slightly contradictory ideas (stating first that these “likely gene disruptions” can be passed on from mothers, but then going on to say that these genetic mutations are often not passed on since people with autism often do not procreate) may confuse readers. Further, the journalist does not explain that a limitation of the study is that the researchers examined only 200 candidate autism genes rather than a whole genome or exome approach.

**RESOURCES ON THE GENETICS OF AUTISM:**Autism Science Foundation <http://autismsciencefoundation.org> *Created to support autism research, with specific opposition to further funding into the disproven and fraudulent reports of autism-vaccine links.*

Genetics of Autism – Video <http://wn.com/Genetics_of_Autism> *Pediatrics Grand Rounds presentation at UCLA, featuring Shafali Jeste, MD (Assistant Professor at Semel Institute), providing a clinical angle to help parents understand why genetic testing of their children with autism is indicated. This talk is hyperlinked on wn.com (WorldNews Network)*

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