Today’s piece was prepared by Erin Hixson, MS-4, based on a Newsmax article [Israel’s Thriving Marijuana Industry May Have Breakthrough in Autism Treatment](http://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/medical-marijuana-israel-autism-treatment/2017/09/21/id/815019/)

The story describes two Israeli research trials using marijuana oil in treating autism. The first is a double-blind, placebo-controlled study of 120 autistic children and the second is an open-label study of 60 children and young adults. Within each study, participants receive a marijuana strain composed mostly of CBD with a small amount of THC.

Compared to a [similar article](https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.813001?ts=_15060342779833) in the Israeli newspaper, Haaretz, the Newsmax article is vague and somewhat misleading. Since no data has yet been published from either study, it is premature to describe marijuana oil as a “…Breakthrough in Autism Treatment”. In addition, the article states that the research has shown “encouraging signs” but fails to elaborate on this statement. The Haaretz article goes into more detail, stating preliminary reports from the open-label study show that a majority of patients report less anxiety and have fewer outbursts, while about one-third show improved communication skills.

Despite its flaws, the Newsmax article raises awareness within American media about research on marijuana use and autism. For parents of children with autism, research news in this area is likely very positive and would give them reason to wait and see what the evidence shows before having their child try it. However, they may not be willing to wait, and the optimistic tone of the article may persuade them to have their child try it now.

**RESOURCES FOR AUTISM RESEARCH:**

[Association for Science in Autism Treatment](https://www.asatonline.org) *Promotes safe, effective, science-based treatments for people with autism by disseminating accurate, timely, and scientifically sound information, advocating for the use of scientific methods to guide treatment, and combating unsubstantiated, inaccurate and false information about autism and its treatment.*

[Autism Science Foundation](http://autismsciencefoundation.org/) *Provides autism information for the general public that adheres to rigorous scientific standards and values.*

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