

# An exploration of the effects of diet on children with autistic spectrum disorders

**Project Team :** Sunfield Research Institute  
*Together with*  
The Brain Bio Centre, London

**Timescale :** Nov 2004 – Nov 2006

## **Background**

There is a growing body of evidence which suggests that children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) experience a range of digestive problems and nutritional deficits. This is based on the theory that a combination of certain foods have a toxicological effect upon their neurological processing. It is suggested that the incomplete breakdown of Gluten and Casein as a result either of the gut dysbiosis or faulty enzyme processing impact upon the central nervous system causing problems with perception, cognition, mood and behaviour. It is advocated that a diet which addresses these problems could to some extent ameliorate the symptoms associated with ASD.

## **The aim of the project**

The aims of the study were to explore:

- (1) The extent to which modification of diet alters the nutritional status of children with ASD.
- (2) The extent to which modification of diet affects the psychological and behavioural functioning of children with ASD.
- (3) The implications of implementing a gluten free/casein free modified diet.

## **The Intervention**

Eleven boys living in residential accommodation at Sunfield participated in the study. A nutritional programme was gradually introduced based on a gluten free, casein free, soya free, yeast free and sugar reduced approach. In addition, each child had an individually tailored supplement regime to increase their intake of vitamins, minerals and essentially fatty acids. The nutritional programme was implemented for eight months, whilst the supplement regime was introduced slightly later with an implementation period of six months.

## **Method**

An evaluation will be conducted using pre and post-intervention data collected by nutritional experts from The Brain Bio Centre and by the Psychology and Therapies Team at Sunfield. This data will generate a profile for each child in terms of their nutritional status and their psychological and behavioural well being. Qualitative interviews have been conducted to consider the process of implementing such a nutritional approach.

## **Time Frame**

Nov 04 – June 05	Consultancy
July 05 – Feb 06	Nutritional Intervention
Sept 05 – Feb 06	Supplement Regime
Feb 06 – Sept 06	Data Collection & analysis
Nov 06	Final Report

For Further Information please contact:

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