

# Study Finds MMR Is Linked With Autism

By Lucy Johnston for the Sunday Express <http://www.express.co.uk>

Scientists have confirmed the controversial link between MMR and autism. The findings corroborate research by Dr Andrew Wakefield, discredited by the Department of Health for suggesting the combined measles, mumps and rubella jab may have contributed to rises in the disorder.

The new study, led by Dr Arthur Krigsman, a child gastroenterologist from New York University School of Medicine, has led to calls for an immediate overhaul of Britain's child vaccination programme. The research, to be presented at the International Conference for Autism Research in Montreal next week, is still going on but, unusually early findings have been released because of the significance. The study, which covers 275 children and is being carried out at different medical centers in America, found serious intestinal inflammation in autistic children identical to that described by Dr Wakefield and his colleagues eight years ago.

Gut biopsy tissue from 82 of these children reveals that 85 per cent have evidence of the measles virus in their inflamed intestines. Fourteen have so far been confirmed by more stringent DNA tests. The news will be a huge embarrassment for the Department of Health which rubbished Dr Wakefield's research on the grounds it was uncorroborated "bad science". Steve Walker, assistant professor at Wake Forest University Medical Centre, North Carolina, who analyzed the gut samples, said the work mirrored Dr Wakefield's study.

"We're very excited by our findings," he said. "Wakefield's study was criticized because it lacked replication. Our goal is to see if the finding was real. Preliminary results show that it was."

Just as Dr Wakefield discovered in his work on the children with a previously unidentified bowel condition, Dr Krigsman's patients had all inexplicably deteriorated, losing language and other skills at around 12 to 18 months of age. All of the children under both doctors were diagnosed with autism and had come to them seeking help for symptoms of serious digestive problems for which no explanation could be found.

Dr Wakefield, who was forced to resign his job as a gastroenterologist at the Royal Free Hospital in north London after he publicized his theory, welcomed the research. He said: "The Department of Health was able to discredit our research by saying no one else had found similar results to ours but no one else had looked.

"In the light of these results - which are strikingly similar to ours - the Government and its regulators are obliged to act. At this stage it would be prudent and in the best interests of vaccine uptake to make single vaccines available."

Dr Richard Halvorsen, a GP from the Holborn Medical Centre in central London, who is writing a book on the child vaccination program, said: "This is incredibly powerful evidence confirming the link between autism, MMR and bowel disease. "The Government should withdraw MMR until its safety can be proven, particularly as we have safer and effective alternatives." Jackie Fletcher, founder of Jabs, a support group for parents who believe their children have been damaged by vaccines, said: "This study confirms that the measles virus is present in the guts of these children when it shouldn't be. "This also shows that the studies, which the Government uses as proof of the safety of MMR vaccine, are inadequate. The MMR should be suspended and single jabs reinstated immediately. We cannot take risks with our children."

A spokeswoman for the Department of Health said it could not comment on the research until it had been presented but she defended the triple jab. "There is no link between autism and the MMR vaccine," she said. "MMR remains the best form of protection against measles, mumps and rubella."